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THE VAMPIRE NEMESIS

& OTHER WEIRD STORIES OF THE CHINA COAST

By DOLLY: Author of "China Coasters" &c.

BRISTOL: J·W·ARROWSMITH·QUAY ST·
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The Vampire Nemesis

and other Weird Stories of the China Coast

BY

DOLLY

AUTHOR OF

"CHINA COASTERS" ETC.

BRISTOL

J. W. ARROWSMITH, QUAY STREET

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THE VAMPIRE NEMESIS.

The Vampire Nemesis.

IN setting down the train of events that occurred at Ningpo on that horror-filled night of August, 18—, I shall make no attempt to justify or excuse my own conduct, nor that of my friend, the end of whose troubled career I shall here endeavour to portray.

Nor would I wish that any who should scan this page should believe that there was aught supernatural about the occurrence. I make no doubt but that all could be readily explained away on grounds purely natural by one who had been a calm observer of the facts, if facts they were, and not some horrible nightmare on which I look back shuddering—one not possessed of the overwrought mind, in a state of nervous tension, such as at the time was mine.

I set them forth here for what they may be worth, and leave the reader to draw his own conclusions.

My reason for reverting at all to so painful a subject, the bare recollection of which, even now,

causes the cold beads of terror to gather, must be that the spirit of my friend and college chum cries to me from the grave that justice be done him; that his memory be cleared of the foul stain of murder, leaving nevertheless that of base treachery and fiendish cruelty.

After years of wavering irresolution, I take up my pen to reopen that chapter of horror.

One word more ere I commence. Those who were at Ningpo at that period, now so many years ago, will doubtless remember some of the incidents which at that time made such a sensation, and should they here, under the assumed names, recognise the actors in the terrible tragedy, let them know that hereby one of them sends greeting.

Fergusson and I had been close friends since those early days at Cambridge when all the world looked rosy and life lay before us. Study had never been our *forte*, and it was perhaps in a mutual avoidance of lectures that we were thrown so much together.

In all the sports we had stood premier. Fergusson had had the proud distinction of pulling in the college eight, while I had competed, unsuccessfully it is true, for the Diamond Sculls at Henley. At cricket and football we were both adepts, and with the gloves neither of us were to be lightly handled; it was only within the bounds of the lecture room that we allowed our inferiority to

any, and these, as I said before, we avoided as religiously as our remaining at college would admit. The very natural result of which was that on our leaving and stepping on to the platform of the world we found, to our chagrin, that it was heads that were required there in the scrimmage, and that arms, be they never so well seasoned, were almost a superfluity, unless one had a fancy for bricklaying or some kindred occupation.

It was about this time that glowing reports commenced to reach England of the gold that lay beneath the fertile soil of British Guiana, the old El Dorado of Sir Walter Ralegh, and Fergusson and I resolved upon going out to see for ourselves if somewhere at least sinews were not in requisition. As a result we did dig some gold, or rather washed it, for it was all alluvial deposits, but we buried much more silver, and after a year we came away in disgust.

Our next billet was at the other end of the world, where, still together, we each got a berth on the two papers that the tiny town in the Malay States could boast. There, being better hands at satire than the respective editors, we used to write the slashing editorials about each other that was nearly all the papers contained. To an outsider, with a sense of humour, it must have been intensely amusing to see the two who in the columns of their journals had been vilifying each other, seeking among their extensive vocabulary for a name bla

enough, drinking an amicable glass together later in the day.

However, there being not enough inhabitants able to read to keep one paper going, the two journals, with a praiseworthy pertinacity, choked each other to death, and with their demise Fergusson and I were once more thrown on our own resources. Yet there exists a certain gentleman of much-maligned character who is reported to look after his own, and he now led us to join the Chinese Imperial Custom Service; thus we drifted from port to port until we were finally stationed at Ningpo, with every prospect of its being a permanency; and it is here that my story may be said to commence.

There being then no Customs quarters there, we each rented a small flat by the river-side, on opposite sides of the stone-flagged street, and about fifty yards apart, and, with a Chinese girl as housekeeper, proceeded to make our lives as comfortable as might be.

I have no desire to pose as a model of virtue. We were neither of us married, but those girls were as faithful to us as any European woman firmly tied in the bonds of Western wedlock could have been.

And here, in relating how Fergusson came by his housekeeper, I must paint in the first dark stain that marred his character. Under him was a half-caste watcher who had a lovely young wife, a girl

of little more than eighteen, also with an obvious strain of Western blood in her veins, though she affected the Chinese costume and spoke but little better pidgin-English than her pure-blooded sisters.

This man Fergusson pursued with the most implacable hatred I have ever seen him exhibit towards any human being, until the poor fellow, who went by the name of Mathews (God knows where he got it from!) was never out of hot water. Fine after fine was imposed upon him—sometimes with justice, however unmerciful; more often without—until one day I angrily remonstrated with Fergusson on his gross injustice.

His only reply was a curtly-expressed desire that I would mind my own business, and as I did not care to come to an open rupture with him for the sake of a half-caste, nothing more was said.

At last poor Mathews fell into a trap which I firmly believe had been deliberately laid for him at the instigation of Fergusson, and was dismissed from the service.

This misfortune reduced the unhappy pair to the verge of starvation, and it was then that I saw the ghastly malignity of Fergusson's relentless persecution. He had been paying surreptitious attentions, when chance offered, to the young girl-wife, and now, having so successfully ruined the husband, he offered her a home beneath his own roof, which she accepted with alacrity.

I suppose I must confess that, after the first burst of anger at Fergusson's treachery to the watcher, I condoned the hideous offence. After all, Fergusson was my old college chum, and perhaps at heart I was as bad myself, lacking but opportunity.

And so for five months everything ran smoothly. "May," as Fergusson called his partner in guilt, took readily to her altered fortunes and changed manner of living, nor seemed in the least to regret the loss of her legitimate lord. Ibe, we heard, had taken to opium-smoking, and during his few hours of wakefulness sought employment as a coolie in the rice-fields on the opposite side of the river. Ibe had never been more than a barely perceptible step above the surrounding Chinaman, but now, in his degradation, he had sunk to the level of the lowest. Yet Fergusson felt no remorse for what was so obviously his handiwork.

One dark night early in February Fergusson and I returned late from the newly-erected Customs Club, and stopped opposite my door. He had taken to drinking rather deeply, and I had stayed on beyond my usual hour to keep an eye on him and prevent him, if possible, from imbibing to excess.

The flat I occupied was over a Chinese shop, and to reach the staircase one had to go through the small go-down to the side to a little courtyard at the back, and so through the door leading to the stairs.

Now, as we stood talking, Fergusson was pressing me to step round to his place and sample a bottle of particularly good whisky he had obtained from a ship on which he had been stationed. But I firmly declined. It was late, I said, past midnight. Fergusson would take no denial.

"Come along," he said, "it isn't twelve yet. May will have something hot in readiness for us. You need not stay long."

"Not twelve?" I echoed. "I wouldn't mind betting it is past one!"

"Done for five dollars," said Fergusson, smiling.

"Right; come upstairs and look at the clock."

We turned and walked through the go-down into the courtyard beyond. But we had no need to ascend the stairs. As we stood there the little clock I kept in my room ("Bow Bells" Fergusson called it) chimed out musically, and we both stood still to listen. I thought as we stood there that I heard a faint stir as of someone entering in the go-down beyond, but paid no heed. The little clock ran through its preliminary chime, then struck one.

"There!" I cried triumphantly.

But scarcely had the sound died away on the stairs when there came the thunderous report of a revolver, fired point-blank in a confined space, and as the reverberations echoed through the go-down Fergusson staggered, with a stifled cry, to the wall. Another shot followed closely on the other, and locating the marksman by the flash of the weapon

in the darkness of the go-down, I made a rush at him, and went sprawling over something soft and yielding lying full across the doorway. I struck a match and bent over it. It was Mathews, or rather the wreck of Mathews, lying there with a tiny stream of blood bubbling out from his temple and trickling across the floor, a smoking pistol—an antiquated "bulldog"—gripped in his hand.

Without waiting to see more, I threw the match away and ran back to see how Fergusson had fared. I found him leaning against the wall, pale but smiling, trying to stanch the flow of blood from a flesh wound in the shoulder.

"Near thing that, Ward," he said coolly, as I inquired anxiously where he was hit. "A little lower, and it would have finished me."

"Where are you hit?" I asked again.

"Left shoulder—mere scratch!"

He sat down on an empty box while I helped him off with his coat.

"Wonder who was the potter?" he said presently.

"Mathews," I answered.

"Damn him!" cried Fergusson furiously, springing to his feet. "The cursed swine! He shall pay for this!"

"He has paid already," I said quietly.

"How?"

"He is outside with a bullet in his brain," I

answered briefly. This night's work was not to my liking.

"That 's right," Fergusson said brutally. "I 'm glad he did the job neatly on himself, just as glad as that he bungled it on me."

"Fergusson," I said sternly, "this is your doing."

"Pshaw! Nonsense! The girl did not want to stay with him, and one must oblige a lady when it lies in one's power so to do."

A crowd was already gathering, attracted by the report; and as Fergusson did not want to be mixed up in the matter, he hastily slipped up to my room and washed and bandaged his arm. Then we sauntered down to where they were gathered round the dead man, leaving it to be inferred that he had simply committed suicide in the street and tumbled into the open doorway.

"Jolly glad," said Fergusson when all was quiet again, "that it did not happen at my place—people would have twigged. I suppose he was lying in wait for me at my door, and when he saw us come in here followed with the intention of potting me when I came out."

Things fell back into their old groove, and months slid by. The only change was that, despite my efforts to keep him straight, Fergusson took to drinking deeper and deeper, and poor May had a hard time of it when he came home drunk, for he ill-used her shamefully. Remonstrance was in vain; when he was in his cups it was utterly useless to

attempt to argue with him, and next morning when he was sobered no one was more contrite, as he viewed the bruises on the girl's tender flesh, than Fergusson himself. Still she stuck to him, doing her best to keep him from the drink, nor ever complaining to him or anyone else of his brutality.

So matters went on until that eventful August night, when began the most frightful series of events it has ever been the lot of mortal man to witness or chronicle.

It was a close, sultry night, with that ominous stillness which, to my mind, always presages some form of disaster. My housekeeper had long ago retired for the night, and I was sitting near the open window smoking and wondering idly what had become of Fergusson, whom I had not seen for three days. On one of his bursts again, was my conclusion. I would have to look him up in the morning and give him a talking to, though I smiled bitterly to myself as I thought of how little use that would be. Things could not go on like this, however, if Fergusson did not want to be dismissed from the service. While I yet pondered on his folly, footsteps creaked on the stairs without, and I looked round to see the man of whom I was thinking standing in the doorway. His eyes were bloodshot and protruding, and his hair—he had come in without a hat—fairly standing on end. His clothes were in disorder, and there was a look

of wild terror in his face, as he staggered into the room, that for the moment alarmed me.

The next I muttered to myself, "Drunk again!" as I crossed to the table beside which he had collapsed into a chair.

He raised his head as I sat down opposite him and looked wildly round the room, as though searching for a presence he could feel but could not see.

"Ward," he said suddenly, turning his terror-stricken eyes on me, "do you believe in ghosts?"

"Spirits?" I asked, contempt in my tones as I pointed to the whisky-bottle on the sideboard. "Yes! So do you, or you would not be here now in that disgusting state."

He flung up his head impatiently.

"Do you believe in transmigration?" he asked again. Fergusson, the cool, the resolute, was trembling like a scared kitten.

"I thought we settled all that to our entire satisfaction years ago at coll.," I told him.

But he went on wildly, unheeding my jesting treatment of the matter.

"Ward, do you think it possible that a man, we will say a Chinaman, could come back to earth in the form of a vampire, to haunt one who has wronged him?"

"Why?" I queried amusedly. "Have you seen him?"

His face was ashen with terror and his lips livid as he muttered—

"I have!"

"My dear man," I laughed, "you've got 'em again, got 'em badly, for this time your rats have wings!"

He answered nothing, only looked apprehensively round the room. I went on:

"Best rat poison for vampires and such, Fergusson, is a course of strict teetotalism, and a few doses of bromide, administered not to them but to yourself."

But my irony was lost on him.

"Listen, Ward!" said he, gripping my arm as in a vice, and there was something of deadly earnestness in his voice that forced my attention. "Last night I came home from the club as usual"—I had no need to ask him in what state "as usual" was, I knew, alas! too well—"and went to the little cupboard where I had stowed three bottles of whisky that I had obtained from the chief officer of one of Butterfield's boats discharging sugar in the river, in order to continue the orgy, and found them gone."

He stopped and glanced round the room again.

"Good job for you!" said I unsympathetically.

He continued—

"I went in and shook May out of her sleep, and asked her what she had done with them; but she professed entire ignorance of them until I gripped her arm till she writhed in pain"—he groaned, and from that I concluded that he

must be sober now, but suffering from delirium tremens—" then she cried out in her agony that she had smashed them so that I should not drink myself to death.

"But I told her roughly she lied, and that I would not release her until she showed me where she had hidden them. She only sobbed, 'Have makee break! Have makee break!' Then, Ward, in a frenzy of drunken passion I got a length of cord and bound her slender wrists and ankles to the head and foot rails of the bed. Bound them" —he shuddered violently—" until I could see the cords cutting into the tender flesh, and her delicate limbs swelling under the torture, and I stood beside her and laughed in glee while she moaned, 'Have makee break! True, have makee break!'"

His head sank on his arms and he groaned again in anguish of remorse. I rose to my feet in sudden heat and strode to his side, shaking him roughly by the collar.

"Fergusson!" I cried fiercely, "is this true? Answer me, man! Is this true?"

"As true," he replied miserably, "as that I look forward to burning in hell for it!"

"You cur!" I cried, flinging him from me, for I knew the depth of the girl's devotion to him.

He did not resent it nor attempt to excuse himself, only looked up at me with a bitter laugh —a laugh that reminded me of the savage snarl of a wounded hyena—and I shuddered involuntarily.

"Listen, Ward, for there is more to come!"

I took two or three hasty turns to and fro, then sat down opposite to him again. He went on with feverish haste, eager to get it over.

"I left her there, Ward! Left her in torture!" His voice rose almost to a wail. "Left her, and went back into the other room. A gust of wind from the open window had blown the lamp out and the room was in darkness, and as I stood there gloating like a fiend over the moans that came from the bed in the other room something swept up against the closed window; a moment later it had returned and fluttered in through the open one."

He stopped suddenly, and a violent trembling shook his frame.

"Ward, it was the 'Thing'!"

"What the——"

"Yes!" he cried eagerly, "the vampire!"

I felt in no mood to laugh at his absurd fancy now. I felt too shocked at the cruel treatment he had meted out to May.

"It came into the room, Ward, and flapped in ever lessening circles round my head. I struck out wildly at It, for I was intoxicated and did not fear It at the time. But It took no notice of my vicious lunges; It sailed three times round my head, then as I thought flapped its way out again through the open window. I looked at my watch; it was exactly one o'clock.

"Firm set on getting more drink, I left the house

again, leaving May to her agony, and made my way back to the club. It was closed, but I made the boy give me a full bottle of whisky, saying I wanted a peg, and brought it away with me.

"I must have drunk half of it before I got back to the house, and when I went in I found the groans had ceased. I went to May's bedside——"

The curtains at the window stirred slightly, and he broke off suddenly with a great start, terror writ large in his face.

"Ward!" he cried, with livid lips, "It is coming! The 'Thing!'"

"Nonsense!" I said. "That was a puff of wind."

The man was utterly unnerved. I had to pacify him as one soothes a little child.

"Go on with your vile story!" I told him at last.

"I went to May's side, and there, Ward, was the 'Thing' on her face. It had Its head just under her ear, with its great wings slowly fanning. Ward!" he almost shrieked, "It was sucking her life's blood! Do you hear me? Sucking her blood! She had swooned with the pain of the cords and the horror of this 'Thing," and I—I stood there, made fearless with drink, laughing in devilish joy at the sight I saw. How long I stayed I do not know, but at last I sank down in stupor beside the bed. I knew nothing more until this morning."

"And then?" I asked. I was getting interested in this curious mental aberration of Fergusson's.

"Then, when I arose," he broke out in sudden fury, "she was dead! Dead, Ward! Dead! dead! dead!"

Suddenly he grew deadly calm, going on with the quietness of a surgeon diagnosing a case.

"There was a tiny puncture under her ear, just on the jugular vein, with a little globule of blood no bigger than a bead exuding from it; but the pillow was bathed in blood, soaked through and through."

Matters were looking black indeed, for I had no doubt at the time that Fergusson had killed her in the frenzy of his drunken passion. Afterward I had no cause to change my mind.

"I think it must have dazed me, for I threw myself across her cold body and lay there until the moment before you saw me," he continued vacantly. "I got up then, leaving her poor stiffened limbs still bound to the bed-rails, and came on here."

"Fergusson," I said gravely, "do you realise what this means, lad? It means murder, and murder is an ugly word—even in China, Fergusson!"

"I realise what it means," he answered gloomily, "and I almost rejoice at it. It will prove one thing—it will prove that Justice, though in the abstract drawing a wrong conclusion from her

premises, will yet be right in the fundamental fact."

"What fact?" For, having come to the same conclusion myself, I did not follow the drift of his reasoning.

"The fact," he replied with a harsh laugh, "that I murdered her; though I swear to you, Ward, that no drop of her blood was shed by hand of mine."

I smiled pityingly, and as I still smiled the little clock in the next room chimed out, then paused for a second and struck one. The smile and the words I was about to utter froze on my lips, for I felt the hair gradually rising on my head with vague, undefined apprehension. At the same moment something struck with a muffled thud against the side of the open window, and I heard a soft, insistent flapping of wings. A sudden puff of wind from somewhere fanned my cheek, as on the floor I saw the dark shadow of some huge "Thing" that was fluttering slowly round the room.

For a space I was too terrified to look up, and when I raised my eyes it was to see a black, shapeless mass flapping through the open window into the blackness of the night beyond. Fergusson had covered his eyes with his hand as he cowered in his chair, shrunk into himself. Now he raised his head and put out a palsied hand, seizing my arm, as he whispered hoarsely—

"Ward, did you see It?"

"See what?" I asked uneasily, more to give myself time to recover my equanimity.

"It! The 'Thing'!"

By this I had regained my composure, and was ready to laugh at my foolish fancy.

"What thing?" I asked him again.

"The vampire!" said Fergusson in the same sepulchral whisper.

"Bosh!" I answered lightly. "There was something came into the room, but it was merely a large bat attracted hither by the light."

"It was a vampire," insisted he, "*the* vampire!"

"We are not in South America now," I replied testily, thoroughly ashamed of my sudden fears, "and there are no vampires in China."

"Nevertheless," Fergusson repeated doggedly, "it was a vampire."

"A flying-fox, perhaps," I told him, "and they are harmless, herbivorous like the bats."

I was puzzled what to do with Fergusson. I could not leave my old chum to be taken in my own house, much as he might deserve it. At last an idea came to me that would at least give us more time.

"Fergusson," I asked, breaking in on the dream into which he had fallen, "did you lock your door before you came away?"

"Lock it? No! Why?"

"Give me your keys," was all I said.

He handed them to me, and leaving him sitting there I sped across the road and gained his house.

Everything was in darkness, but prompted by an impulse of curiosity I could not control, I crept softly into the bedroom and struck a match. Perhaps, after all, the whole thing was but a fancy of his distorted brain, and all might yet be well.

As the match flared up, I held it above my head and looked around. Ah, no! There was the poor girl lashed, as he had described, to the bed, the cords sunk deep in the tender flesh. The pillow, too, was drenched in blood, as he had said, and as I bent over her I saw a small incision in her neck, just below the ear.

It was true enough, then! But in spite of that curious little puncture in the fair skin, I still believed this ghastly thing was the terrible handiwork of my friend, and turned away with a shudder, locking the door ere I left.

I returned to Fergusson, trying by my relation of plans for his escape, to rouse him from the apathy into which he had sunk.

To have attempted to get away by one of the regular Shanghai boats would have been suicidal folly; but there was a Jardine steamer sailing for Hong-Kong in two or three days' time, and if he could stow away in her I hoped he might be able to conceal himself in some remote corner of the world before the hounds of justice were set on his track.

I explained to him that I would report him ill to the comptroller, so allaying suspicion for his non-appearance; and when the boat was ready to sail he was to slip out and sneak on board, trusting to chance to explain away his presence when she was once at sea. No one would be likely to go to his rooms, and provided he lay low in mine he would have a very fair chance of success.

Fergusson, for his part, looked on the whole matter indifferently and took very little interest in the maturing of the plans for his own safety.

Very surprised was my little housekeeper to find when she awoke next morning that my friend had spent the night on the couch in the other room. Of course we told her nothing of what had occurred. Nor did we think it wise to tell her that he would spend two or three days with us, deeming it better to let her find out for herself as the time passed and he still made no move to go to his own home.

Now that I come to the last part of this terrible history I hesitate to set it down, lest it should be looked upon as a mere freak of my imagination. And yet I have not said enough to clear my old friend's name of the black stain of murder and establish his innocence, wherefore I must proceed, though discredit be cast upon the close of the tragedy.

Yet I myself, as I look back from the vantage-coign of these after years, feel a dread steal over

me lest, after all, it should be nothing but the coincidence of a large bat having flown into my room at the precise hour of one, and on another night having hovered near Fergusson's head at the same eerie hour. The rest may have been but the delusions of his drink-maddened brain and my own overwrought fancy. I dread the thought that it may be so, for if such a series of extraordinary coincidences be possible, then it means that Fergusson was a foul murderer.

But speculation is idle; let me finish the gruesome narrative.

That night of pain and horror wore slowly away, and never before or since have I watched the grey dawn creep slowly up from the East with such feelings of gratitude and relief.

The ensuing day, too, passed away without event; so also another night and a day crept by.

I had to leave Fergusson during each day in order to attend to my duties; but I reported him at headquarters unwell, telling the Customs doctor that it was his intention to call shortly and let him prescribe.

The fourth night since the poor girl, lying now so stark and swollen in that silent house, had met her death closed in, and a strange change fell upon Fergusson.

To-morrow at dawn he was to escape to safety in the outgoing Jardine steamer, and as yet we

fancied ourselves secure in the certainty of no one having entered the house of death.

But Fergusson seemed to have abandoned all hope of flight, or, rather, a gloomy despondency that whispered to him of its futility, had settled like a black pall over his being.

All through the early part of that dreadful night I sat talking to him, trying one moment to soothe his craven fears, and the next to rouse him from the apathy of his despair. He was completely unnerved, and had a shuddering premonition that the Thing was hovering near, spite of my repeated assurances that, except for ourselves, the room was empty.

Suddenly, far into the night—how far I knew not then, for I had tried not to count the chimes of the little clock—his terror-sharpened perceptions caught the sharp tramp of distant feet on the flags of the little street below. He rose with shaking knees to his feet and tottered to the window. I had heard the sound too, and followed him, peering over his shoulder. What we saw was the chief of police, with four men in the uniform of the Imperial Constabulary, standing outside Fergusson's door.

As we watched, Major Barnes gave an order in a low undertone, and he and two constables advanced into the house.

We stood watching, frozen into inaction, until they emerged again, and with a low whistle, answered from somewhere behind us, strode straight towards my door.

Then, as the blood rushed back to my palpitating heart, I saw what this meant for Fergusson. By some means the crime had already been discovered, and the hounds of the law were on his trail.

I ran round the room, looking frantically for some means of escape. The front door was impossible; the wall that bounded one side of the little court was far too high for a man to scale without due preparation; and on either side impassable go-downs, with blank walls, having nor door nor window by which to gain access.

He was fairly trapped like a rat in its hole!

But as I gazed in despair at the wall which formed the boundary of the lane that separated us from the British Consul's grounds, my heart went bounding into my throat with joy and hope, for I beheld, what before had escaped my attention, a stout wire stay that, leading from the roof of the go-down beside my window, was made fast to the flagstaff within the grounds, from which in the daytime floated the British Jack. It was nearly horizontal, inclining if anything slightly downwards for about thirty yards until it reached the staff. It passed well clear of the high wall, and should present no obstacle to a desperate man to traverse.

I swung hurriedly towards Fergusson, who was

standing at the window, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, gazing moodily down at the advancing constables.

"Fergusson"—I was almost jocular in the intensity of my relief—"are your muscles as fit as in the old coll. days?"

"Pretty well," he answered absently, without taking his eyes from the street below.

I seized his arm and dragged him forcibly to the rear window.

"See that wire stay?" I cried exultantly, "you can easily traverse that hand over hand to the flag-staff; slide down and slip through the consul's grounds to the river side; then take—steal if necessary—a sampan, and try to get down to Chin Hai. There get aboard one of the outward-bound junks, bound anywhere, so you can get another chance of freedom. The night is dark, and not expecting to find you overhead, they are safe not to see you cross."

While I spoke I had been hastily cramming what loose money I had in the house into his pocket. He roused himself with an effort, and extended his hand.

"Good-bye, Ward, old friend!" he said huskily.

There was a desolate sadness—a hopelessness—in his face and voice that appalled me. He was as a man to whom an impending doom had shown itself clear and strong.

I grasped his hand, gulping down a lump that had risen in my throat.

"Good-bye!" I said. "Now go, there is not a moment to lose! We shall meet again."

But he turned to me once more.

"Never! Ward, you do believe that I did not murder her, do you not? I have been a brute, but say you believe me innocent of *that*."

"Yes, yes!" I cried eagerly, pushing him toward the open window. "Quick! Get out on the sill!"

He stood on the window-sill and climbed up on to the wire, swinging himself out with an agility that showed me he had lost little of his old form.

I stood at the window watching him with a feeling of thankfulness swing lightly along, when —I saw the "Thing" sail swiftly out from under the overhanging eaves and flap toward him.

He did not see it at first as it circled round his head, while I stood there rooted to the spot, unable to stir a finger. Suddenly it swooped down, down, until I could see the blackness of it dimly outlined against his shoulders.

I could not see clearly what happened during those ten awful seconds, but his face was hidden from view—covered by the "Thing." I heard him give a stifled scream of horror that sounded far away, as though a blanket was being pressed firmly

over mouth and nose, and he had stopped clambering. Then he let go one hand to try to tear the bat from his face and draw a breath; but he swung half round on the other arm, and had to clutch the wire again with both hands to save himself from falling.

He turned in frantic terror, trying to regain the window-ledge, and as he came on I, with the cold sweat standing thick on my brow, could see the frightful form pressed close to his face. Three steps he took like that; then he stopped, and his body swayed helplessly, as, with another muffled scream, his hold of the wire relaxed, and he went crashing down to the courtyard beneath.

I heard his skull crush in like an egg-shell as his head struck the stone flags thirty feet below, and while I yet gazed, sick at heart, with the blood frozen in my veins, the horrible "Thing" rose from where he had fallen and fluttered up toward me.

Still, I could not stir, only gaze horrified at the monster as it flapped to the wire, and, hooking on its hinder claws about six feet from the window, hung suspended head down.

A ray of light from the lamp at my back fell upon It, as It turned Its hideous head toward me, and I could see the malignant, beady eyes looking piercingly into mine; *I saw, too, the triangular piece of erect cartilage on the end of the nose that distinguishes the vampire.*

And as I sank to the floor in merciful oblivion the handle of the door rattled, as it swung open, disclosing Major Barnes with four constables at his back.

For an instant I saw him standing there, peering anxiously about the room. Then, as the darkness swept down and engulfed my failing spirit, the little clock within chimed out merrily, paused for a moment, and tolled—One!

DEATH-GRIPS.

Death-Grips.

I.

IT is but ten fleeting months since I stepped proudly from the little Beulah Chapel in Seward Road, the husband of the sweetest, daintiest gir that breathes, with every excuse for acknowledging myself the happiest man on earth; yet here I sit now, toying idly with my pen, about to commence a ghastly confession, of the details of which I am still unashamed, wondering if it can be true that happiness and blissful content ever were so nearly within my grasp.

I hardly know at which point to commence my ghastly story. Am I to begin with my first meeting with Arnold Rawdon? If so, I doubt if I can remember now where it was that I first met the man. I believe it was at the Masonic Club. By profession Rawdon was a dentist, with a practice in Szechuen Road. He was certainly not a robust man, yet inclined to run to flabbiness with excess of fat. Conjuring up his face in the mirror of memory, I find there is scarcely a remarkable feature to record.

He had a weak-looking, sensuous mouth, watery blue eyes, set very closely together, so closely, in fact, as to give the whole face a look of cunning when the vacuous expression was not predominant, and sandy hair. Stay, though. There was one peculiarity about the man which I fancy struck me in those early days of our acquaintanceship—it was obvious enough later. When he was excited or angry the hair from the back of his head to the nape of the neck used fairly to stand on end and bristle, as one sees the hair bristle on the neck of an angry cat. I can recollect remarking what a peculiarly weird appearance it had—a look that, striking some strange chord of sympathy in one's own mind, produced that eerie creeping of the scalp one experiences when in the austere presence of the unknown.

There was a something repellant about the man's manner that prevented my ever desiring to become intimate with him, though I gathered from casual talks, when he was one of the group, that he had practised for a lengthy period in India, and had more than once come into contact with that mysterious sect, the Mahatma. It was admitted by all that he was deeply imbued with the lore of India, and among ourselves Rawdon was an acknowledged authority on all matters, ancient or modern, connected with that country of esoteric learning.

It was rumoured by the idle gossips' tongues of

Shanghai (this I learned later) that Arnold Rawdon was deeply in love with a fair maiden of the community, Miss Ethel Langarde. My own introduction to the lady was under unconventional and rather peculiar circumstances. I was riding in from Jessfield on my bicycle, when I passed her trudging along on foot, pushing her own machine before her. Judging from the rueful glances she from time to time cast upon her steed that something was amiss, I pulled up and inquired if I could be of any service to her. She looked up at me with a comical expression of despair in her frank blue eyes.

"I am afraid my machine has refused duty. The pedal has come off."

Leaving my own bike by the roadside, I stooped to inspect it. The thread of the pedal had stripped, and the nut was hanging loosely on the bolt.

"I think," I assured her, "we can fix that up sufficiently well to take you into town."

"Thanks very much," replied Miss Langarde, "but I am afraid the case is hopeless. We have already tried, my escort and I, but the horrid thing will keep coming off."

She saw my look of inquiry bent on the road in search of the escort of whom she spoke, and hastened to add—

"We gave up the attempt to make it behave itself, and he has ridden on to try and procure a rickshaw or gharry. It 's too bad"—petulantly—

"for that odious thing to break down in the middle of the journey like this!"

"Let us see what can be done," I said.

I am not an inapt mechanic, and managed, with a strip of tin from a match-box case I luckily had in my pocket, to jam the nut on in a manner sufficiently secure to make the machine safe to ride. And having thus put matters to rights, I could do no less than offer to supply the place of the missing escort, who, I devoutly hoped, would have to ride a long way ere finding a conveyance.

"By the way," I remarked, when we were fairly started, "it's very shocking, I suppose, but we don't know each other, and there's no one to make the needful introductions."

"How very dreadful!" she exclaimed, with a bright laugh that sent my front wheel wobbling violently, "I suppose, under the circumstances, we shall be justified in doing it for ourselves. My own name is Ethel Langarde."

"And mine," I replied eagerly, "is Henry Keith."

"So pleased to meet you," she murmured in her most formal tones, whereat we both laughed merrily, and before another twenty yards were covered we were the best of friends.

"Take care, Miss Langarde," I cried presently, for the pace was becoming much too rapid for my liking. "I would not advise you to ride too fast, that pedal might come off again!"

But she saw through my little ruse to protract

the pleasure of the ride, and a mischievous smile dimpled her cheeks.

"Oh, I really think it would be perfectly safe to go a great deal faster!" she replied cheerfully. Nevertheless she slowed down to my pace, which was about as leisurely as I could make it without tumbling off my machine.

And so we pedalled slowly toward the town, I lost in admiration of the dainty loveliness of the girl at my side, and fervently hoping that her companion had smashed his machine in a collision or any other dire mishap that would prevent his turning up before we reached Shanghai. We met him at last some little distance out, conveying a rickshaw, and great was his surprise to see Miss Langarde riding the disabled machine. Great was also my surprise, not unmixed with mortification, to find, as he approached, that the gentleman was none other than Arnold Rawdon.

As he came up, Miss Langarde, slipping from her machine, prepared to make the necessary explanations and introduction.

"See, Mr. Rawdon," she cried, with eyes brimming with roguishness, "the distressed damsel has already been succoured by a gallant knight. Permit me——" Then, catching our looks of mutual recognition, "Ah! but I see you already know each other. How jolly!"

Seeing there was no further excuse for intruding

my company, I was about to raise my cap and turn away, when she interposed—

"But surely Mr. Keith is not going to be so selfish as to ride away without giving us a chance of showing him our gratitude? Mr. Rawdon," she turned imperiously towards him, "please persuade your friend to accompany us and accept a cup of tea."

Rawdon's face was showing as much annoyance as such faces are capable of exhibiting, but he managed to mumble some polite phrase expressive of his wish that I should accompany them. As much to chastise his selfishness as for anything else, I readily conceded, and away we went again three abreast.

"You see, Mr. Keith, my machine might break down again," Miss Langarde murmured demurely, at which remark reflecting on his usefulness as an escort, Rawdon's brow grew blacker yet.

This was the beginning of a friendship that blossomed into intimacy and soon ripened into love. A little more than three months from that lucky day, Ethel and I were made man and wife, and it was only then I discovered that Rawdon had had aspirations toward the same goal. He seemed to take the matter so lightly that I felt almost angry with him for being willing to surrender so rich a prize thus easily. It was, I told myself indignantly, a slight on my wife. How could any man know Ethel and not be in love with her?

He declined to be present at the wedding reception —the whole affair was as quiet as we could make it, for when two people are really happy they do not like to proclaim it from the housetops—but he sent Ethel a magnificent collection of Cashmere shawls, which we understood had been accumulated during his lengthy sojourn in India. He declined with equal persistency to accept any of our invitations, always having some valid excuse, and so gradually Arnold Rawdon dropped out of our life.

II.

Of the major part of my career I need say little. They who have read the Shanghai papers of the last few weeks will have seen it blazoned forth again and again, with wearisome iteration, ever with the addition of some fictitious detail to excuse the repetition of the stale story. I will, therefore, go over the old ground no further than to say that until recently I held the position of sub-editor on that thriving daily, the *Eastern Echo*, with every prospect of ultimately fighting my way to the top of the journalistic ladder.

Mental science had always been to me a topic of absorbing interest to which I had devoted all my spare time, following with avidity the abstruse speculations in both its branches, both the psychic and metaphysic. Though the transcendentalism of Descartes, Kant, and Reid had a great fascination for me, it was to mesmerism and the allied phenomena of hypnotism that I directed most of my researches. It was in the arduous pursuit of these that I came in contact with spiritualism before leaving home for the East, and in the sanguineness of youth dreamed that here

was the medium by which the phenomena of mind were to be brought to the demonstrable level of the exact sciences. In this I was unfortunate, for in the attempt of its devotees to pick the lock of eternity and reveal matters behind the awful veil, my eyes were slowly, yet surely, opened to their rank charlatanism. Medium after medium was detected in the act of strumming surreptitious banjos or rapping on the table with would-be invisible fingers.

The result was that with the rashness of young blood I held that the induction which applied so fittingly to spiritualism was equally true of mesmerism and hypnotism, by the aid of which they claimed to work wonders, and I angrily denounced the whole thing as a hollow fraud.

In the revulsion of disgust, I resolved to devote my time to a science a little more positive, one at least in which I could study the resultant phenomena of the mind's action without being basely cheated by blatant charlatanism, so I turned my attention with renewed zeal to the sister branch—metaphysics.

Here at least I was not unsuccessful in my investigations, and may claim, as the issue of my speculations on mind as related to matter, the authorship of two or three treatises, which the schools have been pleased to look upon with approval, while lauding their depth of research and perspicuity.

It was shortly after the issue of the last pamphlet

that I left London for Shanghai, to take up my duties on the staff of the journal from which I have been so lately torn.

But I still retained my interest in metaphysics, reading eagerly every fresh book that appeared to cast a new light on this most elusive of subjects. With hypnotism I, however, declined to have anything more to do. My awakening from the dreams of the supernatural had been thorough and complete, and I was resolved never again to allow myself to be duped by specious appearances, however plausible.

In justice to myself, I must add that I was not unwilling to admit a certain modicum of truth in the experiments of Mesmer and Braid. I still believed it possible to throw the human mind into a mesmeric sleep by keeping the eye strained on a black wafer stuck on a blank white wall. But I emphatically denied all psychic influence, explaining the phenomenon by the theory of the mind being thrown into a state of morbid activity through the abnormal strain on the attention and the reflex action of an excited imagination.

* * * *

The next time I met Rawdon was out at the race-course. Ethel and I had been to see the review of the volunteers. After it was over, and the people began to move from their seats in the direction of Nankin Road, she slipped away for

a moment to speak to a friend whom she had spied among the crowd, begging me to sit still till she came back. I was idly watching the coolies gathering the pennons that were stuck about the field, when someone, squeezing his way between the benches in front of me, trod heavily on my toe. As he turned to apologise, I recognized Rawdon.

I saw him glance swiftly round as though in search of someone, and it needed no intuition to know he was looking for Ethel.

"She is over there," I said in answer to his glance. "Sit down."

He dropped into the vacant chair beside me and made a few commonplace remarks on the review, while the people filed out in front of me, asking carelessly, "How is Mrs. Keith?"

"Very well, thanks—I might say exceedingly well, in both mind and body."

I could not help letting a small note of triumph creep into my tones, but Rawdon seemed not to notice it, or at least he ignored it.

"Pray give her my kind regards," he said absently, as though about to rise.

"Don't go away yet," I pleaded with a malicious grin, stung by his apparent indifference. "Ethel will be back in a moment, and I'm sure she'll be awfully pleased to see such an old friend."

He swung round on me then, a curious light in his shifty blue eyes.

"Keith!" he said with suppressed vehemence, "you shall both suffer for this!"

I was more amused than angry, as I inquired in mild surprise—

"Suffer for what, my dear fellow?"

He had suppressed the flash of feeling he had shown, which I regretted, as he sneered—

"You are exceedingly dense if you require me to recapitulate the insult you two put upon me!"

"Insult!" I scoffed. "What a very curious view you take of it, Rawdon!"

"You will take a very serious view of it!" he retorted significantly.

I could not help smiling at his vagaries.

"My dear man!" I said impatiently, "spare me your idle threats. What is it? Immolation at the stake? or perhaps chains and the stool of repentance in your castle dungeon? What a pity it is," I mused, "that Shanghai can boast of no bastille!"

But he remained unmoved by my levity.

"Nevertheless, you shall both pay dearly for that day's work," he repeated as he rose and sauntered away.

I could not resist flinging back one taunt more ere he got out of earshot—

"You had your chance, and failed to capture the prize. Your fault, my son, or—your misfortune!"

I did not tell Ethel anything of this when she returned. I knew her generous soul enough to be sure she would worry herself and claim the blame for having allowed Rawdon to think too much of her, though I know that she never gave him a scrap of encouragement.

III.

ARNOLD RAWDON and his puerile threats of vague retribution passed quickly from my thoughts, or lingered but as a hazy memory of a humorous interview. I saw nothing more of him, except perhaps the passing glimpses that in a place like Shanghai are inevitable, for seven months; then we were once more thrown together at a social gathering at the house of a mutual friend in Range Road.

There was a fairly large assembly, composed cheifly of young people, and I was anxious to avoid cause for a display of ill-humour on his part. I was agreeably astonished, therefore, to find that, in place of the morose taciturnity I expected, Rawdon greeted me affably, calmly ignoring the fact that we had parted last—on his side at least—in anger.

In my relief at the prospect of the evening's harmony remaining undisturbed, I felt almost inclined to venture on a gentle gibe on the nature of the dreadful revenge he had wreaked upon us. Fortunately I restrained the impulse.

For a wonder, I had come alone. Ethel had been indisposed, and refused to hear of my remaining to keep her company. It was more to

please her—for she was reproaching herself—that I came at all.

There was the usual questionable playing and the usual unquestionably bad singing, which no one wanted to hear and all were reluctant to do, but which for some occult reason everyone joined in soliciting each of the others to perform.

Then we settled down to idle chatter; but the younger members of the party soon began to grow restless with the exuberance of youth. So games were proposed as an outlet for redundant spirits, but here age again was against them; most were at that transitional period of existence when parlour games are looked upon as "kiddish," and more staid forms of amusement have not yet begun to attract. At last, in a moment of happy inspiration, somebody proposed that we should try the good old experiment of making the table revolve by the force of animal magnetism. The sceptical were lured forward by the assurance that they (the narrators) had seen it done "dozens of times."

"Simplest thing in the world," explained one young lady enthusiastically. "You only have to join hands on the table and think hard."

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed a young man opposite.

"No, Mr. Moore, I did not say join hands under the table," flashed the girl in answer to his estatic look, "I said *on* the table."

The young man's face fell and he appeared to be losing in the discussion.

"I don't think it is very good to think hard," announced a callow youth; "ruins one's digestion."

"You certainly ought to enjoy good health, Mr. Weir!" retorted the same damsel with a merry glance at his pasty face.

She was the life of the party, that girl, and presently by sheer dint of coaxing and over-ruling all objections she had us gathered round a fair-sized table, like so many sheep garnered into the fold.

To heighten the effect and aid the required concentration of thought the lights were turned low, and we all sat with our hands on the circumference of the table, little fingers and thumbs in contact, and thought very hard of ghosts and graveyards, or surreptitiously squeezed the finger of the girl next to us, to a running accompaniment of little squeals and half-suppressed giggles. Then, as the table still remained solid and immobile, one of us elder ones suddenly lifted his hands, thus destroying the circuit, and pronounced the effort a failure. While the supporters of the scheme were reproaching us with not having thought hard enough or with giggling just as the table began to move, Arnold Rawdon, who I noticed had taken his place at the table with a quiet smile that was half a sneer, asked, "Has anybody ever seen hypnotism?"

"Yes," said a youngster wearily, "saw it at home. Professor Kennedy did lots of funny

things—put the 'fluence on a man an' made him drink kerosene for fizz."

"Why, can you hypnotise?" asked a lady with breathless interest.

"I don't believe I have quite lost the power," answered Rawdon.

There was a little "oh!" of pleasurable surprise from more than one of the more impressionable ones, while he continued, "I don't know if anyone will consent to be put off."

I was leaning my back against the mantelpiece listening to this nonsense with a half-disdainful smile, and now a sudden idea seized me. I would make Mr. Arnold Rawdon look small in the eyes of the company by a failure. He might succeed in mesmerizing some young girl of nervous temperament and put her to sleep. But hypnotism! pooh! had I not had experience of this sort of thing before? Obsession? Idiotic word. At least there should be no danger of collusion. I myself would volunteer to be the subject. I had it all mapped out so neatly. I would pretend to go off with prompt obedience, and then, when he turned to assure the company that I was under the influence, I would open one eye and laugh at him. It never for a moment struck me as possible for a well-balanced mind to be "put off" unwillingly; so I said with a short laugh—

"I don't mind being the lamb of sacrifice if Mr. Rawdon cares to try his hand at occult influences."

I have since thought that he accepted my offer with distinct eagerness. At any rate, he came hurriedly towards me as though he feared I might change my mind. I resented the imputation.

"Where shall I sit?" I asked listlessly.

"Stand where you please. That will do quite well," he replied, standing before me.

The rest of the company eagerly drew their chairs round us in a semicircle, and rustled themselves down into attitudes of comfort and rapt attention.

And now occurred a curious phenomenon. I was standing with folded arms, still leaning against the mantelpiece, and gazing with feigned intentness into the eyes of Arnold Rawdon, determined not to let my imagination wander and so give it the chance of playing any tricks upon me, for I think I have said before that I believed in the possibility of the mesmeric sleep where the subject submitted himself unrestrained to the test.

Rawdon was facing me with a clear intensity of gaze that I did not believe could have crept into the weak, blue eyes. Suddenly, with a quick, imperious gesture, he threw both arms high above my head, and allowed them slowly to drop again to the level of my waist, lightly touching my face with the finger ends as they passed. He repeated this three times, or possibly four times, still looking at me with the same intense fixity of gaze, when—I do not know exactly what happened, but the

sensuous face, with its receding chin, seemed suddenly to blur and fade away, and in place of the eyes into which I had been staring I saw two puffs of blue-grey vapour shoot out, as if from a distance, toward me. The only thing to which I can liken it is the discharge of a gun when one is watching the firing of a naval salute. It was just two such puffs of smoke, but of a darker hue, that I saw leap out toward me, small and concentrated at first, but diffusing themselves as they approached, and I caught myself listening involuntarily for the reports; but only one came—one loud, long, prolonged crash, amid the reverberations of which the jets of vapour appeared to run together and unite as they swept toward me. I had an eerie sensation that I was not myself—that the real Me had wriggled out and was standing without my body looking hopelessly on. Then I remember I unfolded my arms and let them drop rigidly to my side. This was the last voluntary movement I remember making.

The next instant the fog-bank had swept down upon me and enveloped me, and I was in utter darkness. A moment thus, then the grey mists began to recede again and heap themselves in a dense, impenetrable wall behind me. And on the other side of that partition I thought was the real spiritual Me, cut off from all communication with my bodily self. An indescribable sense of double consciousness possessed me. There

was my old familiar self standing aside helpless and inert, and another Me that was surging through every fibre of my being, grasping the control of the machine.

As the vapours ran back to nothingness, the room, to my astonished gaze, became quite clear. I could see the company of ladies and gentlemen sitting erect in their chairs, or leaning forward with expressions of awe writ large on their faces. The only one I could not see was Rawdon.

IV.

PRESENTLY something whispered to me that I was a boy again, and that we were spending our seaside holidays at dear old Hastings. I felt myself smiling derisively at the folly of the idea, for the carpet was at my feet, and not the sands of the seashore.

Nevertheless, prompted by some resistless impulse, I sat plump down on the low fender and commenced vigorously to pull off my boots and socks.

I saw the faces of the company broaden into one universal smile, and I cursed myself for my madness. Yet I was impelled to go on with the farce I loathed. I was helpless, urged relentlessly forward by some strange force that seemed to be directing the movements of my limbs. I looked back appealingly for aid to the other Me, but that bank of lurid fog hid me from myself. Then I sprang up with a shout of exultation such as only the exuberance of boyish spirits could give birth to, and ran to and fro on the carpet, kicking up with my bare feet imaginary foam.

The spectators were convulsed with laughter, while I was torn between a desire to rail at them,

an equal wish to curse myself, and a fear of losing the enjoyment of this glorious paddle through the waves. How long I continued successfully to play the imbecile to an admiring circle of friends I do not now distinctly recollect. I grew tired of the sport at last, and commenced slowly to draw on my discarded foot-gear, having first carefully dried my feet.

Then I stood up once more, and as I did so the mists advanced, and I was again in darkness. It passed by me, however, hovering in front of the company, ever receding, until it divided and resolved itself into the two primary jets of smoke. These gradually shrank and concentrated, then disappeared altogether, and I found myself looking into the eyes of Arnold Rawdon, who was lying, white and still, on a neighbouring couch.

They clapped their hands in delighted relief as they saw me look round once more with rational glance. Then our hostess turned to Rawdon, asking him if he felt unwell.

"Oh, it's nothing!" he replied weakly. "Pray, don't mind me; I shall be all right in about five minutes. The mental strain has been rather great —that is all."

My first feeling was one of fury at having thus been made a clown of for the amusement of the company. Then the humorous aspect of the case struck me, as I smiled to think how completely Rawdon had turned the tables upon me.

Next my scientific interest was aroused as I looked back on my experience. Every little action, every thought, was as clear to me as if I had done and thought them in my normal state of mind.

The only moments of oblivion had been during the transition periods, when the mists had closed in around me. And yet, conscious though I was of every act, and absurd as it seemed now to look back upon, I could at the time no more have helped doing what I had done, than I could have wished to repeat the edifying performance now I was my own master.

To say that I was lost in wonder would but imperfectly convey my sentiments. Here was a new sensation with a vengeance. Of course, I told myself, there was some trick in it; but it was a trick full of interest, a trick worth knowing.

Meanwhile the buzz of animated conversation arose again. Arnold Rawdon roused himself as someone poured him out a glass of port, which he swallowed eagerly, and soon was smiling blandly and making glibly untruthful answers to the eager queries of "How is it done?" He did not say a word to me, except to ask, "Feel any the worse for your experience?" to which I answered with a curt "No, thanks."

Afterwards a young lady present expressed a desire to be "put off, if Mr. Rawdon would promise not to make her do anything ridiculous."

Rawdon readily gave his promise, and eager

hands drew an unoccupied armchair into the middle of the room, into which she sank.

She was a girl of highly-strung, imaginative temperament, very different from myself, who, they declare, am possessed of a cool judgment and iron resolution that would do credit to a Wellington. It seemed to me that she was half under the influence, with the strength of an excitable imagination, ere Rawdon commenced operations.

I could not see his eyes, his back being towards me, as he seated himself opposite to her, but I noticed that the hair on the back of his head was standing on end. The man's whole frame seemed to dilate and grow larger, until there was a certain rugged grandeur, a bearing that was almost majestic, in his pose.

I watched the proceedings narrowly, and, it must be confessed, still somewhat sceptically. At the first sweep of his arms, the girl's eyes dilated as if with sudden horror. At the second the iris contracted again suddenly until the pupil was narrowed to little more than a pin-head. He threw his arms up a third time and let them sweep slowly down, and as his arms swept down for the sixth time a violent shuddering shook the frame. As his hands left her face, down which they had travelled with almost caressing touch after the seventh pass, the eyelids snapped open again, and she was looking straight in front of her with the sightless stare of those that look, seeing nothing.

Amid a breathless stillness Rawdon leaned forward and looked into her eyes for a moment, then he said quietly—

"She is under the influence."

There was a long-drawn breath, as though of relief, from the spectators.

Rawdon turned towards them.

"What would you like her to do?"

A lady by my side beckoned to him, and he crossed the room and bent over her. She whispered—

"Make her smell that bunch of violets in that vase over there, and then destroy them."

The hypnotist glanced over to where, on a small table, stood a Sèvres jar with a bunch of violets in it; then he straightened himself, and almost at the same instant the girl struggled up from her arm-chair and came hurriedly and unerringly across the room to where stood the vase.

Without a moment's hesitation she picked up the bunch of violets and inhaled their fragrance, then she suddenly dashed them on the carpet, and with a swift access of fury stamped her little foot on them and ground them to shreds with her heel. Then she walked back to her chair, and sat down as impassive as she had been before.

Rawdon now crossed to her side and laid his hand on her forehead, leaning over and saying something—what I could not hear—to her in a low voice. Another tremor passed over her, and her

eyes closed for a second or two, then opened again, this time with their natural expression, though a trifle bewildered. We crowded eagerly round her.

"Oh, everything seems so funny!" she exclaimed, gazing around.

"Did you know what you were doing?" someone asked.

"Oh, yes! I knew perfectly well, only I could not help doing it." She turned and gazed ruefully at the crushed blossoms. "And I am so fond of violets, too!"

There was no mistaking the genuine regret in her voice at her palpable act of vandalism, and I for one was convinced.

Rawdon, meanwhile, was standing outside the circle, quietly turning over the leaves of an album, utterly unconcerned whether anyone disbelieved the evidence of their senses or not.

V.

I took my way home that evening in a very mixed frame of mind indeed. Here was something worthy of investigation. A thing, a power, that I had long ago thrown aside in disgust as a fraud and the device of charlatans, had been demonstrated before my astonished eyes, nay, more, upon my own person, in a manner that could not fail to bring conviction to the most sceptical.

I began already to regret having allowed my interest to abate just because a few dishonest spiritualists had pretended to make use of a power they did not possess. I had undoubtedly been too hasty in my condemnation of all for the fault of the few, and had thus wasted many valuable years that might have been devoted to research into this mystery of mysteries. Anyhow, I decided, as I reached my own door, what I had that night experienced and witnessed was convincing enough to determine me upon reverting to the subject once more.

I was fortunate—ought I to say fortunate or cursed?—in meeting Rawdon again within the week at a friend's with whom I was dining. It was, with the exception of myself, a bachelor

party; and as we sat over our coffee and cigars the usual discussion was going forward as to what form of play the cards should take, while the evening slipped by in the arranging.

But I advocated no cards at all. The truth is I was burning with a desire to investigate this wonderful new force, with the power of which I had but lately become cognizant. So I deftly led the conversation round to occult matters in general, and gradually narrowed the field of discussion down to hypnotism. From there it was but a step to announce that Rawdon understood something about it, and to offer myself as a candidate to be experimented on.

I am positive, now I look back upon that moment, that I saw a sudden gleam of triumph flicker for a moment in the eyes of Rawdon. Yet he seemed reluctant to go through with the test, and required some coaxing, with not a little chaff from the others, about his fears of failure, before he would consent to operate. I was so interested that I did not care what act of folly I committed if only I could learn more of this. Besides, there were only five men present besides ourselves, and one does not mind so much making a fool of oneself for five minutes when the fair sex is not represented.

I noted this time two or three points. One was that I sank under the influence of the force much sooner than I had done before. I explained this to myself on the hypothesis that I had surrendered

myself more readily to it than I had done before. Another was that when I came to, Rawdon seemed to be no more affected by what he called the "mental strain" than he had been after he had made the girl destroy her favourite blossoms. Possibly this was because he had not attempted to make me do anything so flagrantly opposed to my own inclinations as had been that paddle on the imaginary seashore.

But most remarkable of all was that after the mists had cleared—and, by the way, they swept down upon me with much greater rapidity and stayed but an instant—the faces of two gentlemen sitting opposite to me, to whom I had been introduced for the first time, seemed perfectly familiar. I thought I had known them for years and years, instead of two short hours. I remembered incidents in their lives that had occurred many years ago. I saw myself in their company in familiar surroundings, and I recalled, with peculiar vividness, scenes in the past of my own life with which hitherto I had been totally unacquainted. It was literally recalling with wonderful detail incidents that until now I never knew had happened to me.

All this puzzled me exceedingly, until some time afterwards I discovered that both men were old friends of Arnold Rawdon. Then a ray of light seemed to fall athwart my mind, and I think I understood.

I told my darling Ethel nothing of these interesting experiments at first, but the subject had such a deep fascination for me that, in order to be able to carry out some lesser investigations at home, I had to take her partially into my confidence. She understood but little of the matter, but what interested me interested her, and she did her best to understand the explanations I vouchsafed. For four nights running I tried, with remarkable success, Mesmer's experiment with the black spot on a white ground. I had my mosquito net lowered until the top was within two feet of my head. To this I affixed a small circle of black velvet, and having first asked Ethel to shake me at a given hour and try if she could wake me, I kept my eyes staring unblinkingly at the black spot.

"I shook you," she said afterwards, "I screamed into your ear, and rubbed your face with a rough towel. I even," with a mischievous twinkle, "pinched you horribly hard, but not the tiniest bit of notice would you take until early morning."

The next night, to my satisfaction, I went off in less than five minutes, and the two following ones almost instantaneously.

But the trances were mere spells of utter oblivion and not nearly so interesting as the experiments I had conducted with Rawdon. Fool! Blind fool that I was! Little did I dream that in thus tampering with my mind I was making the

hellish task of Arnold Rawdon easier of accomplishment! And yet there came to me at times a dim, fleeting suspicion that I was not doing right. A thought woven on the fragile gossamer filaments of fancy that dissolved away ere it could shape itself into words, yet in its going left me filled with a vague disquiet.

VI.

It was perhaps this disquietude that prompted me to call one evening after dinner on an old friend of mine—Fred Armstrong. It had been my custom, in my bachelor days, to drop in on him for a smoke and a game of chess, and to discuss the news of the day, touching sometimes on deeper topics. Armstrong belonged to the Idealistic school, and was an ardent follower of Berkley and Hume. He retained, however, sufficient belief in the reality of the existence of matter to be wishful of accumulating a pile of it in the form of gold, in which laudable endeavour he had been by no means unsuccessful. Withal Armstrong was a deeply-read man, and a man who never turned over the page before he had a thorough mastery of its contents. He received me with open avowals of delight.

"Just the man above all others I should have wished to see!" he remarked gaily. "I am so glad the wife has consented to spare you for a few hours to lighten the dreary evening of a lone bachelor. I am fairly dying for a game of chess."

As he spoke he was busily pulling the pieces

from a neighbouring drawer and drawing up an inlaid table to the fire.

I expressed myself in no mood for chess just then; but he would hear of no denial, so we sat down to our game.

I think I played about the most idiotic game it has been my lot to play since first I learned the moves. I advanced my queen into the most absurdly unprotected positions, until Armstrong had frequently to caution me of her danger. I moved the king into the check fully a dozen times, and scattered my pieces over the board without method or reason. At last, on the first pretence of a serious attack, for the opportunity of which Armstrong had not long to wait, I resigned the game and pushed the board fretfully aside. I was in no fit mood for chess; I found it impossible to concentrate on the pieces the thoughts that were so busy elsewhere.

We lit our pipes and smoked for awhile in silence; then, "Armstrong, do you believe in hypnotism?" I asked.

He looked at me in silence. I repeated my question.

"Why, of course I do. It is one of the forces of nature, just as much as gravity or electricity."

"And yet," I remonstrated, "science takes no cognisance of it."

"Science," quoted Armstrong sententiously, "like the law, is an ass. She takes cognisance of nothing

until it is literally forced upon her attention. Two hundred years ago science took no heed of gravity until Isaac Newton infallibly demonstrated its existence. Then it was all eager investigation, after they had first had their laugh at the so-called 'mad philosopher.' There is no deadlier enemy to true research than this precious science."

"You believe, then," I asked breathlessly, "that it is a potential or possibly actual force?"

"Years hence," Armstrong replied, "the laws of hypnotism, for like every natural force it is subject to fixed laws, will be rescued from empiricism and tabulated as are to-day those of gravity and heat. I concede," he added slowly, "that as yet we know but little of them. All we see now are results, and the cause is hidden in mystery."

"Do you think then that it is possible for one vill to subjugate another?"

Armstrong smiled deprecatingly.

"Subjugate is hardly the word," he said at length. "That is a vulgar error that the stronger will dominates the weaker, and compels it to do its bidding as one dictates to a child."

"What is it then?" I inquired.

"The thing is to have the power of projecting your own will into other persons and of making it supersede their own. Mind, you do not overcome it, you only supersede it—shoulder it aside. Thus what we call a strong-minded man may find his will-power superseded by a man of comparatively

weak intellect, who has the power of detaching his own will from himself and of projecting it into another individual. It is a pure fallacy that it is merely a question of the relative strength of will."

"I am afraid," I hazarded, unwilling to be duped a second time by idle shibboleths, "I do not follow you. Will you explain?"

Armstrong, seeing my evident interest, warmed to his favourite topic.

"We know," he said in his didactic way, "that certain nerves do not pass beyond the great nerve-centres or ganglia, and are but remotely connected with the brain. The muscles are worked entirely from the ganglia—such, for instance, as the one that causes the descent of the diaphragm—and they perform their functions unremittingly without the slightest effort of volition on our part. Yet the reflex action of these great bunches of nerve fibre can, by a conscious effort, be brought under the sway of the will, and their power over the muscles be for the time suspended. We can hold our breath, or stop the blinking of an eyelid, examples of purely reflex actions, by the exercise of our wills. Conversely, movements that we dreamed were entirely under the control of our volitions, such as the motion of a hand or foot, can be taken from the dominion of the will and be governed by the reflex action of the ganglia, as when a gun is fired in the vicinity of a nervous person he starts involuntarily, though perhaps but

a moment before he had schooled himself to withstand the shock."

His pipe, during this long speech, had gone out; mine, in the absorption of what he said, was equally cold. Now we both relit and smoked for awhile in silence.

"That," I mused, "belongs almost as much to my branch of science as yours."

"It is possible," Armstrong continued, unheeding, "that in this manner all the movements of the newly-born infant are purely reflex, that the sensations travel no farther than the ganglia or the cerebellum at most, and are there translated into action without the will-power having any hand whatsoever in their control. Later, the cerebrum may take command of certain movements and direct when a message shall be sent along the nerves ordering the muscles to act; but even then we have seen that certain actions still remain under the peculiar control of the ganglia, and it requires a special exercise of will to wrest from them their power and alter for the moment their course."

"Yes! yes!" I interrupted impatiently, for I thought he was straying wide of the subject about which I was so eager to learn more; "but how does that affect hypnotism?"

"The obvious inference, my dear Keith, would seem that the hypnotist, by some telepathic disturbance set up in the mind of the subject,

interposes his own will between the volitions and the nerve-centres, cutting the lines of communication, until every movement, however intricate, is, so far as the will of the subject is concerned, as much a reflex action as was that of breathing or digestion. And now, as the telegraphist who has cut a telegraph wire can affix to the severed end his own instrument and send what message he will to its destination, while the messages from the station at the other end can no longer pass through, the hypnotist gains entire control of the wires leading to the muscles, and can transmit to them what order he pleases *and be obeyed!* He has thus the complete mastery of the human machine, while the brain of the subject, thinking and willing as coherently as ever, finds its messages along the nerves intercepted and lost before they can be translated into motion. What else is somnambulism?"

Armstrong looked at me defiantly, as if challenging contradiction, but I nodded my head in approval and let him go on.

"Another will, the dream will, is interposed between the sleeper's mind and his body, and he performs deeds that in his waking moments would be utterly beyond him. A somnambulist in his sleep can walk in safety across a plank spanning a yawning abyss which in the daytime he would be unable to contemplate without a shudder. And why? Because his movements are beyond the

control of the volitions, and, reel as the brain may, the steps remain firm and steady."

"So," I said, impressed and startled by this new phase of the subject, "you hold that it is not a matter of will opposed to will?"

Armstrong made a gesture of impatience.

"I emphatically deny that the hypnotist conquers or overcomes the will of the subject. He simply sets it aside, and interposes his own volitions between it and the movements of the body it should control. While, as I have said, the brain goes on thinking and willing, it is as surely restrained from influencing the actions of the muscles as if the knife of the surgeon had severed the spinal cord immmediately below the medulla oblongata."

"Have you found during your investigations," I questioned again, "that the subject is easier to hypnotise after each successive operation?"

"Decidedly!" he answered promptly. "Though perhaps it is largely a matter of temperament. Some will go under the influence easily at the first attempt; with others, it requires frequent and repeated efforts before the hypnotic state can be easily induced. In all, I believe, it becomes easier after each operation, until the hypnotist can put that particular subject off by merely willing it."

"And what are the limits of distance at which the force can act?"

"As far as thought itself! There are no limits. When we discover the limit to which we can

project our thoughts, we shall probably have found the limit at which will-force is effective. You can think as easily of objects five yards away as of the mountains in the moon, or the nebulous patches that astronomers tell us are star-clusters in the outermost limits of space!"

"Have you ever known, Armstrong," something suddenly prompted me to ask, "this power to have been used for a wrong purpose?"

"I have never had personal experience of it," he answered, "but I have heard of cases where the hypnotist has made his subject commit crime against his will, though he was conscious of what he did."

He was looking at me curiously, his suspicions, perhaps, aroused by my intense interest.

"It is a fascinating subject," I answered evasively.

"It *is* a fascinating subject," he responded. "Think of the boundless fields for research lying ready to the hand of science which she is blindly ignoring. When a biologist discovers some new microbe half the scientific world goes crazy with delight, and the other half watches its proceedings with breathless concern; yet here are these virgin fields inviting the explorer, and only a few pioneers to venture on the task. How petty do such paltry researches into matter appear when compared with this one that strikes at the very root of Being and the matter of the soul!"

I bade good-night to Armstrong and walked home to our little house in —— Road, pondering deeply on many things, and uppermost in my thoughts was ever this hitherto neglected branch of mental science, whose manifestations I had years before spurned from me as spurious. Thus, I thought bitterly, did the quacks that hover in their shoals round everything sensational deter the earnest from research and throw them off the scent more effectively than Armstrong had, in his scathing irony, accused the causeless ban of science of doing. Yet my own earlier eagerness to investigate as deeply as I might had to a great extent evaporated.

Something had cooled my ardour, something I could neither name nor locate.

VII.

As I swung along through the silent street I felt a vague, indefinable dread creeping over me, a sudden terror of the unknown. People of nervous temperament have told us they have felt that sensation, and described it as a vague premonition of impending disaster. At times I felt my mind about to grasp the elusive thought and shape it into words. I would stop abruptly in my walk trying to find what it was I feared; but, however, ere I could seize it, it would slip away again—the nameless dread would vanish, and I would walk on, for the moment reassured, only to feel the same eerie sensation of awe gripping at my heart again. Twice I glanced apprehensively over my shoulder and smiled at my folly.

When I gained the house Ethel was sitting up for me, and I left my fears at the door as I crossed the threshold and stood in her bright company; but her quick eyes noted the pallor on my face.

"Why," she cried, "Harry, what is the matter?"

"Matter?" I echoed. "Nothing that I know of."

"My dear boy, you look as if you had seen a ghost." She crossed the room and sat herself on my knee, twining an arm lovingly round my neck.

"Or as if," she crooned playfully, "you had been chased by my dressmaker with a long bill!"

"Which means," I said, smiling, for with her arm encircling me, I could find no room for fear in a heart so full of love, "which means, my dear Ethel, that you have your eye on a 'lovely new hat' at Hall and Holtz or somewhere, and mean me to augment that bill."

"No, dear, it is not a hat this time."

"Not a hat!" said I, trying to recollect my repertoire of feminine adornments. "Let me see; is it, then, one of those thing-um-bobs? What do you call them—fichus?"

"Nor is it a fichu," replied Ethel very gravely. "I want you, Harry, dear, to give up this black spot on the mosquito-bar business."

"My dear Ethel, what a curious request!"

"Nevertheless, I am quite serious. Oh, Harry, I cannot bear the ghastly look in your wide eyes when you are lying there in that dreadful sleep. I cannot close an eye myself, but sit watching and watching until you stir again, half afraid all the time you might not be able to bring yourself back again."

I drew her face down to mine and kissed her.

"Besides," she continued, tenderly stroking my hair, "it is worrying you. You have not been looking yourself of late. See, sir," she cried, slipping off my knee and planting her little hands on my shoulders, "you are looking quite pale now,

and those horrid lines"—she traced them lovingly with her finger—"are growing deeper and deeper every day."

I drew her back again to my knee.

"Do you know, Ethel, I was about to decide myself upon giving it up. This settles it. At least, I shall give up all personal experiments, and such investigations as I carry out shall be the researches of a mere outsider."

"Oh, I am so glad!" she said, clapping her hands with glee. "And now, sir, I have a secret to confide to you," and with a blush she placed her lips to my ear, and shyly whispered to me of a coming event that makes the husband wish that he could peer for a moment into futurity and be reassured. This was on a Tuesday evening; on Thursday evening, the weather being fine, I determined to dispense with a rickshaw and walk down from the office. I abandoned my usual route along the Bund and Broadway and chose Szechuen Road, albeit a litttle longer.

As I neared the Soochow Creek a sudden, agonising pang shot through one of my teeth. It was one of those sudden twinges that make one catch one's breath, and it returned again and again with maddening persistency, until I felt half-wild with the pain. The tooth, too, was a sound one; at least, I had never noticed any cavity in it. I walked hurriedly down the street, trying in my haste to dull the pain; and, as I went, a brass plate,

with a name and the words "Surgeon-dentist," on the opposite side of the street caught my eye.

Instantly the desire seized me to have the troublesome tooth out, decayed or not. Without a moment's hesitation, I crossed the road. I can remember experiencing no surprise at reading the name "A. Rawdon" on the plate as I passed in, though he had never before attended me in his professional capacity. It seemed quite natural, too, that the maddening ache should vanish as suddenly as it had come, as I crossed the threshold. Still, I walked on and pushed open the door of the surgery.

Arnold Rawdon was leaning over the back of his operating chair as I entered, his face white and drawn, as I had seen it on that first evening, but with a look of expectancy in his eyes that changed to triumph, as he saw me walk straight to the chair and sink into it.

"Ah, you have come!" he muttered. Then, in his more professional tones, "H'm, let me see!" pulling my mouth open and peering in with that brutal inquisitiveness that is the special privilege of dentists. "Yes, it will have to come out. Rather firm set, too! Will you have gas?"

"I detest gas!" I murmured feebly.

"I thought so!" with an odd smile playing about the corners of his mouth. "Well, we will try something else."

While he was still speaking I felt a change

coming over myself; I felt that peculiar feeling of double consciousness that I was myself, yet not myself.

Rawdon meanwhile had turned to a cabinet on which stood a bottle and two glasses in readiness, and filled one of them nearly to the brim.

"Try this," he said, coming toward me. "I don't know if you are a connoisseur, but I think you will find this good stuff."

He had held the glass under my nose; it was brandy, neat brandy. I have been all my life a strict teetotaller, and the reeking odour of the spirits filled me with unutterable loathing and disgust. Nevertheless, I seized the glass eagerly, and, putting it to my lips, drained the contents at one long draught.

"So," Rawdon said mockingly, "that is better."

He turned casually away, taking up a paper and humming a light ditty to himself as he ran his eyes down the columns; and I sat there in the chair, perfectly rigid, unable to move a muscle, while every fibre of my being was crying out to me to get up and flee. My eyes were fixed on his form—he had his back partly towards me—as I strove to gather my strength for one supreme effort, only to find it futile. Again and again I thus attempted to rise, but always in vain.

After some time had elapsed he let fall the paper and turned again to the bottle on the cabinet, filling my glass this time half-full.

"Now," he cried, as he placed the glass in my hand, "we will have a toast. We will drink to dear Mrs. Keith."

He turned and poured out a few spoonfuls into the other glass.

"Look! I, too, intend to honour the toast. Are you ready? Well, then, 'To dear Mrs. Keith, and long may she be happy in her wedded life!'"

"'To dear Mrs. Keith!'" I echoed obediently, "'and——'" The rest of the sentence was lost. I was swallowing with avidity the scalding liquid in my glass.

Rawdon watched me with malignant satisfaction gleaming in every repulsive feature, then turned away again to a couch, and, with his arm hanging limply over the side, seemed to be dozing off.

As I sat there, a second and more insidious change began to creep over me. The feeling of double consciousness was becoming less distinct. The predominant alien will, to which my own personality had succumbed, appeared to be deserting the captured citadel. My thoughts, that had hitherto been so agonisingly clear, were becoming blurred and dim, until my head fell forward in stupor and partial oblivion. I took no note of the time as I crouched there in that chair, while a little marble clock ticked off the seconds and added them to the irrevocable past. I only know that it was dark when I again stirred to some faint knowledge of my surroundings.

I have a dim recollection of someone, it must have been Rawdon, ushering me ceremoniously out of the house. He hailed a passing rickshaw, into which, with his sympathetic help, I clambered. He gave my address to the coolie, and, as we clattered off, stood bowing and smiling his farewells at the gate. And as the rickshaw sped through the night, jolting down North Szechuen Road with my head hanging helplessly over the side, keeping time to every jar and jolt, I realised dimly that I was hopelessly, sottishly inebriated. Drunk as the dipsomaniac who, having eluded the vigilance of his watchers, has stolen undetected into a well-stocked wine cellar—and with the tooth untouched!

VIII.

We reached the house at last, and the coolie lowered the shafts to the ground. I half-stepped, half-rolled out on to the pavement. Dropping a handful of coins on the flags, I staggered up to the door, clinging to the rails, grabbing desperately at every slender means of support.

It was much beyond my usual time for returning, and Ethel must have been looking out for me, for as I stumbled up to the door, it opened ere I could touch it, and I almost fell across the threshold.

Ethel's first expression was one of surprise—

"Why, Harry, where's your hat?"

It was the first intimation I had of having lost it. I mumbled something in reply about having left it somewhere, as I leaned up against the hat-stand, striving, with that pitiful gravity a drunken man assumes, to appear sober.

My poor wife thought at first that I was feigning, and evidently admired my powers of mimicry. But as I stumbled into the dining-room and sprawled in a chair, her face, even to my blunted perceptions, showed traces of impatience.

"Come, Harry," she said, "enough of this. Dinner has been waiting ever so long."

I looked at her with a maudlin smile and mumbled something irrelevant about my lost hat.

"Harry!" she cried again, "please don't act like that! You hurt me, dear."

There was a note of pathos and love in her voice that penetrated even to my drink-sodden brain, but I only looked at her with that ghastly grin, and tried to pull myself together.

"Do you hear me, sir!" she said brightly, changing her tactics, as she came across to me and placed her hands on my shoulders with that imperiousness of gesture so characteristic of her. She was about to shake me playfully, but as she bent toward me, her nostrils caught the reeking odour of spirits in my thick breathing.

She dropped her arms to her side as if I had struck her, and her eyes dilated with sudden wonder and something of fear.

"Harry, what is it?" she whispered.

"Ish ar–right, me dear!"

She had shrunk away from me a step; now she came close to me again, regardless of the stench of the liquor, and, laying a trembling hand on my arm, stooped and looked for a moment straight into my eyes.

"Harry!" was all she said. It was as a cry wrung from a soul in agony.

"Ish ar-right!" I muttered again fretfully. "Lesh have dinner."

But I could eat nothing, could hardly sit up to

the table. Nor was her appetite any better. She sat watching me with the look of a stricken animal in her blue eyes. The tender mouth was trembling pitifully, and every now and then I saw her eyes glisten brightly.

What was the matter with Ethel I could not make out. Why could not she be bright and cheerful as she always was?

But when I rose from the table and, staggering to a couch, threw myself down to sleep, I saw her take out her handkerchief and bury her face in it, while great sobs shook her frame.

I remained on the couch until the early morning hours, when, sober and with a bitter loathing in my soul for myself and life, I crept up to bed. Ethel was lying asleep, the tremulous look about her mouth and the long lashes wet with recent tears. I dared not in my pollution lay myself beside her, so with a rug I curled myself on the sofa, to doze fitfully and to dream until daylight of fiends issuing from the mouth of a gigantic bottle.

The next morning was a time of bitter humiliation for me, and it must have held a torture far worse for my lovely young wife. When I awoke from the deep slumber into which, with the first approach of grey dawn, I had sunk I was alone. I looked at the clock. Half-past eight. Time I was away. What had kept me? Why had I lain on the sofa? Then with a flash that left me stunned and helpless, it came back to me—that and more. Not

only the effect did I remember, the cause was clear and vivid. I saw now too clearly the reason of that vague dread of an unknown something that had possessed me. This was the elusive horror that my mind had been chasing in a vain endeavour to grasp and realise—this, to be possessed of a fiend, of a devil, as surely as the Galilean of old, of whose aberration we used to read with a smile, as being but an empty figure of speech. And I had deliberately walked into the trap; nay, more, had myself forged the chains wherewith I was to be bound on the wheel and broken.

Bitterly I cursed the inquisitive folly that had urged me into allowing him to practise his black art upon me a second time, and had assisted him in his vileness by my own blind experiments. The man dominated my entire being. He was my master in spirit; he had the power to project himself into my body and take command of it. I felt, as I passed my hands to my throbbing temples, that I was at the beck and call of this unscrupulous scoundrel. He could make me come when he willed it, could make me do as he willed; nay, more, he could make me *think* as he willed, or, worse, could think for me and make my body act on the decisions of his mind.

Fool that I was! I had walked blindly into the pitfall—had calmly surrendered myself to the claws of the tiger; and *this* had been the culmination! The culmination! The end! Was this

the end? Would the devil be satisfied with this one disgrace? Might he not make me repeat the shameful performance in public as well as to break the heart of my poor wife?

What was yet to come? But I would fight against it I told myself fiercely. With every atom of my intellect, with every nerve and fibre of my being, I would fight against it. And I *must* succeed. If there is a God in heaven He must help one of His creatures to regain his independence. He could not stand coldly aside and permit such a frightful wrong. Fight! Fight! Fight! That was my only hope, and with the depth of my resolution my soul grew stronger, and the future assumed a rosier hue. Alas! I little dreamed, as I dressed and went downstairs, what my tortured spirit had yet to go through.

I met Ethel at the breakfast table, her eyes red with weeping and her lips quivering. Perhaps her woman's intuition warned her that this was but the first step on the downward path. Ah, but she did not guess the force that had thrust me relentlessly forward into that state of bestial intoxication, I who had never touched liquor of any sort before! And I did not tell her, made no attempt to excuse myself, but sat there like a whipped cur, trying to eat some breakfast, with but one desire—to escape from those appealing eyes.

Once I was on the point of telling her all, but I smothered the impulse. Of what use to tell

her? She would not understand even if she believed, and she could not help me; it was but adding to her misery. No, I must fight it out by myself.

She never alluded to the night before; she hardly spoke a word, except to give an order to the Chinese boy. She only sat there watching me, with a sadness in her eyes that wrung my heart. Oh, my sweet, dainty Ethel, could you but have guessed what I suffered then—What I suffered for your sake as well as for my own, and for that little one yet unborn!

The Chinese boy, gliding silently round the table, guessed there was something amiss, for I caught him several times looking curiously from one to the other, as though trying to read in our faces the nature of the quarrel. Ethel, with quick decision, had sent him away the night before, as soon as she grasped the true state of affairs, so he could have had no clue from which to draw inferences.

As I drew on my coat before setting out, I looked over my shoulder, to see Ethel's eyes still following me with a passion of entreaty in their blue depths that spoke to me more plainly than the most fervent torrent of words could have done.

I walked down to the newspaper office with bitter rebellion in my heart against life and the inscrutable power that orders things here below, and permits such black villainy to go unchecked.

I was totally unfit for work. I was completely unmanned and trembling like a scared hare, and ever in the midst of my efforts to fix my thoughts on my work, I caught myself looking forward with dread to the time when I should have to quit the shelter of the office and go—where? But I reached home in safety, and the next day passed without event.

The next was Sunday, and the blessed calm of that day stole over my spirits and I began to breathe freely again. Thank God, my fears had been groundless! I had lived through three days without feeling that terrible power, and in my relief I told myself that the dreadful phantom had gone. The effort had proved too much for him, and he had abandoned the attempt. Had I gone into that den of his on one of those evenings, perhaps I should have found him weak and helpless as I had seen him on that first evening in Range Road.

Still Ethel never alluded to that Thursday night, nor did I tell her a word of what had occurred. Now that I was myself again and free from the horror there was less reason than ever that I should tell her.

So I left her to think it was a sudden impulse of weakness to which I had yielded, tempted perhaps by some friends, and which I had promptly conquered as soon as I had realised my folly.

IX.

MONDAY came, and after a hard day's work I left the office and started for home.

Oh, my God! my God! I cannot write down the details of that night of horror. I had not taken twenty steps from the office door before I felt myself gripped by the force. Gripped and dragged ruthlessly along through the busy Shanghai streets as if I was being carried, feebly struggling, in the arms of a puissant giant.

He was standing in the surgery, very much as he had been before, but by the side of the bottle stood a decanter.

He smiled and nodded to me as I pushed open the door and crept submissively to the chair.

"Ah," he said, "back again! Well, I am pleased to see you."

He turned to the cabinet, picking up the bottle and holding it up to the light, his head on one side.

"I am delighted at the compliment you pay my poor selection of spirits in coming back for some more. I think you will find this rather superior to the other."

He raised the decanter and poured out a glassful.

"I got this especially for you, knowing your

fondness for the stuff. It is the very best liqueur brandy; strong, too. It cost—let me see, what did it cost? Well, well, no matter, I think I can afford it."

He handed me the glass, and I drained it as I had drained the others, handing it back to be refilled. He took the empty glass with a laugh.

"What, more? I say, be careful, you know. I appreciate the flattery, but it won't do for you to go home drunk every time. Consider how shocked dear Mrs. Keith would be. You owe your wife some consideration, you know. Never mind; here you are."

"You fiend! You hell-hound!" I longed to tell him, but my tongue refused to utter a sound. Instead, I seized the glass and drank off the contents in large gulps.

Rawdon sent me home in much the same state as I had been before. No, worse, for I was morose and aggressive instead of being maudlin. And I struck my wife. O God! I struck her, my sweet, patient Ethel! Struck her because she was sitting there with drawn, haggard face, looking at me so sadly, so appealingly.

I felt I was going mad. No mind could support this intolerable horror and live. And there was no relief for me; turn where I would there was no relief. The law? What could the police do for me? Had I gone to them and told them that a man was making me drink against my will and

ill-treat my wife, they would have laughed at me. They would have scouted the idea and recommended me to see a doctor, not a magistrate. And they would not have been to blame. Had anyone told me two short months before, that such a thing was possible—that in this twentieth century, here in this city of Shanghai, with all its boasted civilisation, a man could be ridden to destruction by the will of another man or fiend, call it what you will—like them I would have laughed derisively and recommended chloral to the one who feared so absurd a contingency.

Then intervened another three days of calm and comparative peace. But I had never regained my spirits; that shadow, I felt, was still hanging over me, watching me, ready to swoop down again and whirl me away whither it willed.

Oh, the agonising suspense of that first day! That horrible waiting with bated breath for something to happen—something that seemed vivid and clear enough, yet that the mind could not frame.

It was no wonder that my bodily health began to give way under the fearful strain. My nerves were all gone. My hand shook so that I could hardly raise a spoonful of soup to my lips without its spilling—I who but a short time before had made a boast of my steady nerves.

Ethel saw me with alarm growing paler and more haggard every day, and on the morning of

the third insisted on my seeing a doctor. I could read in her eyes what it was she feared. She thought my mind was tottering, and God knows it was, but from a cause she never guessed.

The doctor came, and, as I had anticipated, told me it was nerves. I had been overworking myself, and he recommended a rest. He left me an opiate, and that night I enjoyed the first unbroken slumber that had been my lot for many a day.

On that morning of the fourth day I arose more refreshed and at ease, and went down to my office. The long day's work helped to restore a little the mental equilibrium that had been so pitiably disturbed, and thus afternoon came.

The paper was nearly ready for striking off, there remained but a few more proofs to be corrected for the third and last time.

I touched my bell and told the boy to get me some from the hand-press; I would help correct them. They were second proofs, but, for a Chinese compositor, remarkably clear that day. As I ran my eye down the column hardly a misspelt word did I see. At last I picked out a mistake and seized my pen to make the necessary correction in the margin; but a couple of minutes after I found myself drawing circles and squares in red ink on the margin of the proof sheet, and the correction was still unmade.

Then suddenly I dropped the pen and reached for my hat, resolved upon going home. It was

fully an hour before my usual time of departure. I rarely left the office until the evening's issue was well under way. But this afternoon I felt a strange reluctance to remain there any longer; I felt I wanted to go home to my waiting wife. So I rang the bell again, and returned the proofs, dirty as when they had been brought to me, to the astonished devil and hurried out.

The door of the editor's sanctum was ajar, so I sneaked past, loth to be asked for an explanation of my early departure when I had none to give. Thus I gained the street, and, hailing a rickshaw, was soon trotting down Szechuen Road; but, once in the air, I felt vaguely uneasy. What had been the cause of my sudden desire to leave the office? I had a chill feeling that this sudden move had nothing to do with a wish of my own—that it was something outside of me. So, troubled and ill-at-ease, the rickshaw took me down Szechuen Road to the bridge that spans Soochow Creek, when just as we were about to mount the incline, I felt myself gripped by the force that of late had dominated my being. What little will had hitherto controlled my actions was suddenly wrenched from me; I felt the terrible power, like an iron hand, compressing my heart as though it would silence its throbbing.

I tried to tell the rickshaw-coolie to go faster; instead I bade him stop, and stepped out. I knew now what it was. That fiend had thrown his

baleful influence over me again, and was dragging me off to some fresh devilment. My God! what was I going to do now? I asked myself wildly as I hurried along, breaking every now and then into a short run. I was skirting the creek, making for the gardens, and beyond them the river. Was this irresistible force, that was dragging and pushing me along as helplessly as though I were bound fast to a traction-engine, going to drag me headlong over the Bund and into the water? For the moment I hoped it was. Life like this had grown intolerable. Death, anything, was better than being the sport of a devil incarnate.

I crossed the approach to the Broadway Bridge and turned into the gardens, walking straight toward the summer-house that stands facing the river. As I approached, the violent trembling to which my frame was growing so accustomed shook me, and I did the last few paces at a run. It seemed but the logical result of a natural law of causation that as I approached I should see Arnold Rawdon seated on the bench in the semi-obscurity within. There was the usual intense yet far-away look in his eyes, as he held poised between finger and thumb the stump of a cigar that had long since gone out for lack of attention.

I say I was not surprised, for I realised with an inward groan of anguish that it was for this I had come. I appeared now to have known it all along; it was for this I had paid off my rickshaw at the

creek and hurried to the rendezvous. My master had called me, and I had come. As my form cut off the light in the doorway his eyes focussed themselves upon me, and he gave a little gasp of relief and sat erect, a faint colour tinging the ghastly pallor of his cheeks and lips.

I ran eagerly forward with outstretched hand.

"Did you want me, Rawdon? I am come."

He rose and took my hand, looking at me with those terrible eyes in which lurked so much expression, a vindictive sneer of malice curving his lips.

"Oh, yes!" he answered quietly. "I am very glad to see you here, of course. You know I am always glad to avail myself of the benefit of your society."

I felt a fierce longing to use the hand that was so cordially shaking his to strike him down at my feet. Instead, I stood gazing at him with the servile look a spaniel bends on his master. He continued—

"I am glad, too, to see you are sober. It must be fearfully harassing to dear Mrs. Keith to see her husband straying so recklessly from the paths of moderation and virtue."

He stopped suddenly and seemed to be making an effort to concentrate his mind, while the pupils of his eyes, that had been so horribly dilated, narrowed and contracted almost to their normal size. I could see the iris drawing together as one

sees the iris of a cat contract when brought from darkness into a brilliant light.

I felt his power over me slipping away and my own will beginning, very faintly at first, to assert itself. He felt the waning of his strength, too, and strove desperately to regain the ground he was losing.

"You hound!" I cried, marvelling at my own temerity while yet the words passed my lips, "This is your doing!"

"My doing? My dear fellow"—he was still cool and collected, and spoke with the same bitter sneer —"I quite fail to see wherein I am responsible for your erratic doings. And yet I suppose it is my fault—a fault of omission. Still," he added ironically, "one would hardly expect me to go very far out of my way to keep an ungrateful friend sober for the sake of preserving the connubial concord."

"You cursed devil!" I cried again, this time feeling more emboldened. "You know that it is your vile machinations that have forced me to drink against my will."

"My dear Keith!"—he raised his eyebrows in well-simulated astonishment—"surely you are not quite yourself. Consider; were anyone to hear you say such an absurd thing they might insinuate you were demented."

"I know! I know!" I answered. "And if I go mad, if there is a God above us, the cause will be judged to you."

The white lips drew back from his teeth in a smile that resembled the snarl of a savage beast.

"Ah, I think I said I would make you both suffer!—and somebody was kind enough to deride the idea. We must try now what we can do with Mrs. Keith—the charming Ethel!"

At the mention of my sweet Ethel's name, I blazed out in sudden fury, and the intensity of my passion helped to throw off the last vestige of his dominating will. I advanced a step nearer him.

"Have a care, Rawdon," I said hoarsely. "You have me more or less in your viperous toils; but by the God in Heaven, if harm comes to Ethel, I will never allow myself a moment's rest so long as you are in this world, if I have to drag you down to hell in my own arms!"

I was at bay and desperate, and he cowered away from the menace in my eyes, sinking back limply on the seat. Man to man, I was vastly Arnold Rawdon's superior in physical strength, and he knew it. He knew too, as I was beginning to feel, that for the time his power was in abeyance, crushed down by the strength of my passion.

For the moment I was master of the situation, and while I still could do it I turned swiftly and made my way blindly out of the gardens, and along Broadway to my home.

I reached the house sanguine and cheerfull Surely in that struggle I had at last broken away

from the spell that had been cast over me. Already I saw my life, that had been so grimly lurid, opening out in new vistas of peace and happiness. Oh, was ever the divine gift of free-will dearer, more precious than it seemed to me at that moment, after thinking I had for ever lost it!

X.

LOOKING back, I see now with what resiliency the mind is apt to spring back to hope and buoyancy the instant the pressure is removed. Crushed though the spirit appears beneath the weight, at the first respite it is ready to leap up and fancy that because the sun is shining and the stars invisible, they do not exist.

Rawdon, I remembered with a thrill of thankfulness, had been plainly cowed by my threatening demeanour. He would not dare now to goad me further to desperation.

As day after day passed, and my will remained my own to guide my actions as I chose, I was filled with deep gratitude for my release from the talons of this fiend in human shape. Thus I soothed my soul with specious comfort, nor dreamed that my tormentor was but fostering his dissipated mental energy.

I did not gauge the black depths of Rawdon's malignant soul. I did not know how dear to the hypnotist was his power, so dear as to make him wish to exercise it at all risks. But I was to find out. My God! I was to find that in the midst of

my fancied security I was as heavily fettered at if bound with visible chains!

A few days before my editor had called me into his room and recommended me to take a brief holiday. He had noted my harassed looks, had noticed, too, the discrepancies in my work, that of late had become too glaringly frequent, and concluded that the strain of the last few weeks—we were in the middle of the Japanese war—had been too much for me.

"Take your wife down to Hong-Kong and back," he had said kindly; "we can spare you, I think, for three weeks, and you will return all the more fit and ready to do two men's share."

I had thanked him and declined. I did not want to go. In truth, I could not have gone had I wished. But now everything was different. I told my chief that I intended to avail myself of his liberality, and would take a trip to Chefoo. He looked mildly surprised that I should choose to go North instead of South. It was still early in the year, and Chefoo would be much too cold to be pleasant. However, he acquiesced readily in my wish for a holiday, so we made all preparations, my wife and I, to go up by one of the Butterfield boats.

The day before we sailed I received a note from Rawdon. I read it through, then put it away with a smile. I was so confident in my new strength that I did not care a rap what he had to say or what he did.

"I am glad," it said, "that you propose taking a holiday at Chefoo, and hope it will be a long and enjoyable one, though I sadly fear you may find it convenient to return long before the expiration of the allotted period.—Yours very sincerely, A. RAWDON."

Long before we reached our destination the words of the note had begun to haunt me with the ominous and now familiar presentiment of coming danger; yet at the time of its receipt I read it through and tossed it carelessly into my desk, for I could afford to smile then at his vague innuendoes.

And so we left Shanghai for Chefoo in the steamship *Hunan*, I, poor fool, cheerful at my release and confident in my newly-recovered strength; Ethel, with quick womanly sympathy, noticing my altered looks, equally rejoiced at my obvious improvement in health.

In the wisdom of after-knowledge I wonder at myself for thinking that the reptile could so easily have allowed his power to slip from him. I see now that those vague premonitions of approaching disaster that towards the latter end of our journey assailed me, were a warning that this old man of the sea was still clinging tenaciously to my shoulders, riding me to destruction, though for the time he had apparently relinquished the curb and forborne to use the spurs. I see it all so plainly now, and it makes it all the more bitter to look back upon. There is nothing more pitifully sad than to look

back, as we rise bruised and broken, at the pit over which we have stumbled, and see how plain it was had we but looked.

It was the commencement of the foggy season. The typhoons had made way for the blistering north-east monsoon, which in turn had yielded place to the dreaded fog, and the harassed sailor could look forward, with what resignation he might, to two or three months of constant groping and creeping out of the darkness astern into the darkness ahead, with nothing but the fog whistle of the passing steamers, braying like frightened animals out there in the blackness, to assure him that earth and sea yet existed.

We had our full share of it. Off the Shantung promontory it shut down like a pall that made either end of the ship melt away and vanish; but while the captain and the officer of the watch anxiously paced the bridge, or leaned over the rails as though trying to get just a foot or two nearer and to catch the welcome shriek of the lighthouse syren, I stood on the deck below, positively glorying in the fog. It was to me as a solid wall that shut me out completely from the world and the force I had begun again to dread. We rounded the promontory guided by nothing but that weird shriek, that commenced in a gurgle and died away in a groan, and as we bore up in the direction of Eddy Island, the og continued as impenetrably dense as before. To my wayward fancy, it seemed like the hand of a

protecting Providence hiding my tracks from the ken of my malevolent pursuer.

We reached Chefoo and put up at the cosy little Beach Hotel; and here for two days life ran smoothly, and I was happy and at ease. On the third I got up early and went alone for a stroll along one of the prettiest stretches of sandy beach the China coast can boast.

It was a glorious morning; the fresh sea-breeze blew in upon me with a sense of freedom infinitely soothing to my oppressed spirit. Far out, the Kutai Islands were waging their passive war against the encroaching sea, as it boiled and seethed angrily around the rocks on their shore, in its mad endeavour to sweep in on the ships lying so snugly at anchor in the harbour.

I had intended walking right out to the wall that crests the hill beyond the bay, but soon after passing the schools I stopped in indecision, and stood looking back along the curving sweep of the yellow sands that terminated in the bold headland of Tower Hill, with its shades of green and brown backed by the sunlit blue of the sea. And as I looked at the few ships that, anchored farther out than the others, peeped coyly round its base, I turned and, hardly aware of what I was doing, commenced to retrace my steps. Upon passing the French Vice-Consulate, instead of continuing along the beach as I had come, I turned to the left, going by way of the fields to the custom house jetty in the town.

Here I paused, gazing restlessly out toward the Bluff and the open sea, until a Japanese steamer, with the "blue-peter" flying at the fore, caught my eye. A jet of steam was issuing from her forecastle head as she hove short her cable, and still blindly obeying the sudden impulse that had brought me thus far, I hastened down the steps, and, jumping into a sampan, directed the boatman to pull with all speed to the outgoing steamer.

Once on board, I had no need to ask of the astonished captain where she was going. I knew. How could she be bound for any place but Shanghai, since that resistless force had drawn me on board of her?—drawn me as easily across these four hundred and eighty miles as if I had still been at Shanghai.

I engaged my passage on board, and tearing a leaf out of my note-book, scribbled a few hurried lines to my wife, telling her I had been recalled to town on a matter of the utmost importance, and directing her to collect our baggage and follow me down by the first steamer. I gave the note with directions to the sampan man who had brought me off; then, as the steamer began to move out from the roads, I went below to the cabin that had been hastily cleared out for my reception, overwhelmed by a shuddering terror I dare not attempt to depict.

This was the meaning of that note of his. The fiend! He was dragging me back, fight against it as I might, to the bondage I feared and loathed.

Dragging me back as surely and relentlessly as the cat, with one cruel paw, claws back the wounded mouse that is trying to crawl beyond her reach.

I sat down on the settee and cried like a little child. It was the first time I remembered to have shed tears since I entered upon boyhood, but I wept now with the feeling of utter helplessness of a child in the dark.

I believe, in the numbness of my despair, I would have flung myself over the ship's side and so have ended all. A dozen times during that short voyage, the wish formed itself in my mind and crystallised into resolution, but I dared not carry it out. It was not the constraint of fear, for who would fear a welcome visitor with freedom and rest in his gift? I had to go to Shanghai, and go I must. Even the last grim remedy, which all Humanity holds itself free to grasp when the burdens of life have become too oppressive to be borne, was denied me.

The horror of it! That haunting conviction that I was no longer a free agent—that I could not even seek death without another's permission! Insanity itself would have been a relief. I thought, enviously, as we swung past the Saddles, of a lunatic I had once seen, to whom the cares of the world were but shadows, who, laughing ever, lived but in the glorious present among joys of his own conjuring.

And so we turned into the Yangste, and catching

a convenient tide at Woosung, reached Shanghai that same evening. It was growing dark before we passed the bar signal station, and the red lights hoisted on the flag-staff looked to my shuddering sight like the glaring orbs of an Argus-eyed monster, gloating luridly over my recapture, as they blinked at us from astern.

On reaching town, I drove at once to the house and let myself in with the latch-key. The Chinese boy who had been left in charge was unmistakably surprised at my unexpected return—a surprise not unmixed with chagrin, for he was dispensing liberal hospitality in the kitchen to a crowd of admiring friends, who had taken up permanent quarters there during our absence.

And now, curiously enough, the compelling force that had drawn me here lessened in intensity and ceased altogether on my arrival at home. It left me in a state of mental perturbation, drifting waywardly to and fro, like the boat that, whirling down the rapids, finds itself drawn suddenly into the comparative calm of some backwater, lacking the guiding hand that had once urged it to the descent.

XI.

It seemed to me next morning incredible that I should have been brought down to Shanghai, and then permitted to lie quietly in my own bed, making an attempt, however futile, to sleep.

What new horror lay in store for me from that reptile? I asked myself as I rose, shivering from the effect of apprehension working on disordered nerves. This day would show—at least, I should know the worst.

But no. The day passed quietly away. I stuck methodically to routine work, and would vouchsafe no reason to the rest of my staff for my speedy return. Once a horrible thought seized me. Why had I been made to return without my wife? Had I been permitted to consult her, she would certainly have accompanied me. Great God! could it be possible that that fiend——? I dared not allow my mind to frame the ghastly thought. But I took the first opportunity of finding out where Rawdon was. To my relief, he was still at Shanghai. I cannot write down the horrible fear that assailed me.

Two days later Ethel followed me down from Chefoo. She was looking frightened and distressed

at my abrupt departure, but there was no look of reproach in the lovely eyes as she greeted me. Her sole anxiety had been for me. What was the matter of such urgency that had called me away without giving me time to say a word of farewell to her? But I could only answer evasively that it was business of the utmost importance.

It was on the evening after her return that Rawdon, the parasite, again took possession of my body to work it as he willed. In our little drawing-room were some cherished specimens of old English tapestry, such as the ladies of the early part of the century had loved to work. They had been commenced by Ethel's grandmother and finished by her mother, who had made a present of them to my wife. There was nothing in the whole house that she cherished with such reverent affection as these examples of bygone industry, and Arnold Rawdon knew of them, and knew the value she set on them—at least he must have known; yet no, perhaps he did not: I cannot tell. I have long since given up all attempt to discover what the man saw with his own eyes and what with mine.

We were sitting together in the room, as was our wont. Ethel was at the piano playing to me the airs she knew I loved, when my eyes, roaming over the walls, came ultimately to rest on the tapestries. I sat looking fixedly at them for some time, then rose and walked toward them and began deliberately to tear them down. Ethel heard the

rustle and flutter, as one after the other came to the ground, and stopped playing.

I felt her eyes turned on me with that old look of apprehension, and I felt the brutal cruelty of what I was doing. Yet I coolly picked up one of the pieces that lay at my feet, and rent it deliberately in two. The stuff was rotten with age, and yielded readily to my efforts. Then I took each half separately and tore it across again and yet again, until a mass of shredded cloth was all that remained of the tapestry my wife had loved. I picked up the second piece; but here Ethel, stung into action at seeing this ruthless destruction of her treasures, rose in agitation from her place and crossed to my side, imploring me to desist. I shall never forget that look of pleading, grief, and fear I saw in her eyes, as I stood for a moment coldly regarding her. She uttered not a word,—there was no need for words, with looks so eloquent.

And I understood clearly every expression that flitted across her face. I realised perfectly the pain I was causing her. It was all so clear to me, yet disassociated from myself, a sensation apart, that had nothing to do with my actions. After gazing at her like this for a second or two I laughed harshly, and seizing her roughly by the arm, led her back to her place and returned to my hellish work.

I was destroying the last piece, gloating as I did so over my work, when I commenced to experience

again that feeling of change that had come over me before in the public gardens—that indescribable something that told me my muscles were coming under the control of my own volition again. As before, too, my soul sprang eagerly forward to regain possession of the evacuated citadel, and almost before I was aware of it, I was myself, my own free-thinking self, standing there, looking stupidly down at a piece of tapestry I held in my hands.

I glanced across at Ethel. She had left her seat at the piano and had thrown herself face down on the couch; I could see the dainty shoulders heaving as she struggled to repress her sobs. As I crossed to her side to ask her forgiveness, to try and explain, I stopped abruptly as the bitter question formulated itself in my brain: What explanation could I offer? What could I tell her to excuse such an act—that someone at a distance had compelled me to do it against my will? Would Ethel understand? Would she not rather think her worst fear was confirmed—the fear that I read so plainly in those clear, horror-stricken eyes—that I had lost my reason?

No, the thing was hopeless. I must let her think what she would. Explanations would but make it worse. And so, with head bowed in utter hopelessness, I crept softly from the room and up to our bedroom.

What was to be the end of it? I asked myself.

Was this to go on until, under the fiend's relentless sway, I had driven my patient young wife from my side? As time progressed, and it cost him less effort to dominate me, might he not keep me so the whole time, and change me from what I was to what he wished me to be? Where was God that He could permit a human soul to be torn and tortured like this? And afterward? Aye, after! To what devilry was this the stepping-stone? Would he bring his evil powers to bear on sweet Ethel—before my helpless eyes, perhaps—an sully her? No! no! a thousand times no! This, at least, I swore should never happen, cost what it might to prevent. I was desperate now. God only knows what I would become ere that. I would strangle him. I would tear his vile heart out with my unaided fingers—or kill her—before he succeeded in that! Even death would be better for Ethel than such a bondage.

With such and kindred thoughts surging wildly through my brain, I sat there on the edge of the bed, wondering what was to be the outcome of this. When Ethel came trembling upstairs she found me, dressed as when I had left the drawing-room, stretched on the bed, worn out with mental exhaustion and the bitterness of my thoughts. The climax came the next evening.

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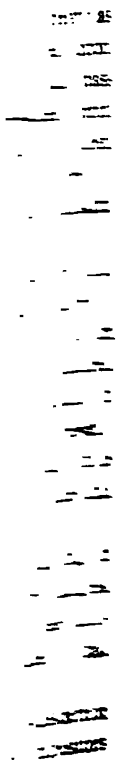
What was to be



on the morrow. Then I too went upstairs. Ethel had fallen asleep, and I stood looking down at her with a thrill of gratitude to Heaven for having blessed me with such a wife.

The pure young face was turned slightly from me, and I could see the line of the dark lashes that touched her cheek and swept upward again.

One bare, rounded arm was thrown upward in curves of graceful beauty, until the little hand was lost in the loosened coils of fair hair beneath her head.

Her whole attitude, in its youthful freshness and repose, whispered a witchery more thrilling than the charm of her waking moments. But as I stood watching the placid heave of her bosom, the fond smile faded from my lips, and I set my teeth; for a diabolical plan had commenced to insinuate itself into my mind—an impulse that made me quiver with terror and fall back a step as I fought frantically to thrust it aside. I knew perfectly what it was, knew too whence it emanated; and with the knowledge came the ghastly conviction that it was useless to struggle against the growing dominance, that I must obey or, what was worse, yield up my body to the force, that it might work its will.

Not one detail of what occurred within the next twenty minutes was hidden from me; I could no more have concealed from myself what I was doing than I could have averted it.

In the dining-room stood a Japanese charcoal stove that we had bought as an ornament, but which we sometimes used as a unique footwarmer on unusually cold evenings.

This I now dragged out and ignited, creeping steadily back to the room with it in my arms. With fiendish deliberation, I chose the most convenient place in which to put it, and carefully closed the doors, blocked up the chimney, and assured myself that the window was firmly fastened. Then I stirred the glowing embers to brisker life, piled them in a heap, and sat down to watch the effects of the fumes on my sleeping wife.

I was going to suffocate her, to stifle her, as one smokes out a rat in its hole; and I had to stay here and watch her until the fumes became too dense to be longer endured, or perhaps to perish myself.

Oh, the hell-hound! the fiend incarnate! He was making me commit murder—murder of the foulest kind—and I helpless and powerless to prevent it! Ah, why had I let him live to draw another breath when I had him for the moment in my power there in the gardens? Why did I turn and fly to save my own miserable life, and so ensure the destruction of Ethel's?

The insidious fumes grew denser! I rose from my knees beside the furnace, where I had been fanning the charcoal into a fiercer glow, and contemplated it from a safer distance. In the lurid

glow of the embers I thought I traced the vile features of Rawdon looking out at me with his sardonic leer. I could even trace in the grey ash on the upper pieces the bristling sandy hair, stiff and erect, as I had too often seen it.

Once I almost shook myself free of this frightful obsession and ran forward to the brazier; but my purpose was changed before I reached it, and I but stirred the glowing embers afresh.

The fumes grew heavier still in their deadly pungency. Ethel stirred slightly, and allowed her arm to sink to her side. I watched her with bated breath, fearful she might wake.

The room was becoming untenable; I retreated slowly toward the closed door. I would gladly, had I been allowed, have laid myself down beside my girl-wife and the little child yet unborn and have shared their fate, but the inexorable force prevented me. I must leave them, must close the door, and leave them there to die, while I preserved my miserable life until such time as the scaffold claimed it and the world branded me with the blood of my young wife.

I reached the door, and stood there swaying to and fro in anguish, a terrible struggle going on between my own will and this that was ruling my body—such a struggle as I had never made before. May God shield any conscious being from such a one again! And while I stood rocking thus in the agony of impotence, Ethel stirred once more.

They say a person suffocating from the fumes of charcoal sees visions of wondrous beauty. I do not doubt it, for as I gazed, Ethel turned in her sleep and smiled. Her sweet face was turned full towards me, and while the ghost of that smile of ineffable peace still lingered round the corners of her mouth, I felt something go like a ripping seam behind my ear.

It was freedom! It was the swift transition from obsession to free will!

My brain reeled with the joy of the thought as I clung to the door handle, for one brief second, as stunned and inert as I had been before under the influence of the force. The next, the intense desire for action tingled its way sharply through every fibre of my body. I sprang forward, and dashed my fist through every pane of the window in rapid succession. Then I bounded back to the door, threw it wide open, and tore the rug from the chimney where I had stuffed it. Lastly, I seized the brazier of glowing charcoal, regardless of my searing flesh, and dashed it with all my force through the broken window, tearing away with it the useless framework.

The crash aroused Ethel from the lethargy into which she was sinking.

She opened her eyes languidly and looked around. The gas-jet was still burning low, but gradually brightening under the indraught of sweet, fresh air from the shattered window.

She looked around in bewilderment, slowly raising herself on her hands. As she did so the coils of hair became unfastened and fell about her shoulders in a glorious cascade of shimmering bronze. Her nightgown had slipped from one bare shoulder and her bosom was heaving quickly. I sent one wild prayer of thanks to Heaven as I saw her bosom heaving. My eyes were fixed upon her face, while my fingers fumbled in frantic haste for the bottle of chloroform I kept in a case of drugs I had used for killing and curing the natural history specimens I had been accustomed to send to an enthusiastic friend at home.

The look of bewilderment was giving place to one of terror in the eyes of Ethel as I rose to my feet. Her voice was pitifully weak and strained, and she could scarcely articulate the words as she asked—

"What is the matter, Harry?" and a moment after, "Harry, where are you going?"

"Nothing! Nowhere!" I replied quickly. "Ethel, I am going out. Try to think as lightly of me as you can."

As I reached the door I glanced back. She had thrown her hair back from her eyes, and was striving to get up, while the bewildered look crept back into her eyes at her unaccountable weakness.

XIII.

THAT was the last time I saw my wife, except for the brief interviews here under the eyes of the warder, and that is the picture I shall carry with me into the grave; aye, and beyond.

The next instant I had darted through the door, and, gaining the street, was hurrying wildly toward Arnold Rawdon's surgery in Szechuen Road, with but one thought in my mind, but one purpose, one duty looming large and clear before my eyes.

As I hurried blindly through the deserted streets my mind was made up, my purpose implacably fixed. It was the choice between the murder of the innocent girl I loved and the extermination—one could not call it murder to hurl such a viper out of existence—of this fiend who was trying to make me stain my soul with the blood of my wife.

He had called me many a time, and I had come; now I was coming to him without his bidding. Now was the time to do it--now while I knew his power was for the time gone. Now! now! while he had overreached himself and was in a state of mental remission of the force spent! Thank God, it had come in time! Perhaps he thought his vile purpose already accomplished, and had allowed his mind

to wander and sink from its intensity of concentration.

I feared that if I dallied, his power might return before I could wreak my vengeance. I knew my utter helplessness if it should, and hurried still more, until I dashed up to the house in Szechuen Road breathless and palpitating. The boy opened to my vigorous knock with a look of grieved astonishment in his sleepy eyes, but I pushed roughly past him and rushed up the stairs. He knew me, however, or was too sleepy to heed my wild looks, and crept gladly back to his bed. I could see by the streak of light from beneath the door that a lamp was burning in the study; I pushed the door ajar and peered cautiously in. Yes, Rawdon was there!

Stepping swiftly into the room I closed the door behind me. He was lying on a couch against the opposite wall, a rug thrown over his knees. His pale face was livid and ghastly, and beneath the shifty eyes were heavy shadows that the lamplight from above intensified. He had been expecting me, I think, for as I turned from closing the door, he raised himself on his elbow, and without a word stared at me with eyes in which I thought I detected a glance of terror

I turned again to the door. There was no key in the lock, but immediately below it was a stout bolt; this I shot.

It was clear to both of us, as our eyes met one

more, there beneath the swinging lamp, that but one of us could hope to draw that bolt again and pass out a living man.

I had been fumbling in my pocket for the bottle of chloroform which it had been my intention to hurl at him and smash in his face before he could use the terrible power of his eyes; but now, as he fixed those eyes on mine, the impatient movement of my fingers was stilled. And so for a space we stood and eyed each other, each conscious that a life depended on the result—that it was now or never he must gain the mastery.

It may have been only for minutes, but it seemed to me interminable hours that we stood there wrestling in that terrible death-grip of the eyes, as I crouched like a tiger waiting his chance to spring.

Twice, as his hair bristled and stood on end, the sensuous face blurred away from my sight, and twice the jets of blue-grey vapour leapt forth to meet me. But with a desperate effort I shook myself free from the spell that was mastering me and met his gaze.

Then there came a change. His face turned yet more livid in its ghastly pallor, and his brow puckered and wrinkled, while the corners of the weak mouth were drawn suddenly downward, as one sees in a child that is about to burst into tears. Then his eyes seemed to snap and crackle for a moment, ere with contracted pupils, that dilated again with fear, they glazed swiftly over. With a

despairing gasp, the only sound that had been uttered, Rawdon fell back on the couch.

I had conquered!

With one terrible bound I hurled myself across the room to his side. In my triumph the chloroform and all my carefully laid plans were forgotten, for my knee was planted on his breast and my fingers were busy at his throat.

Into that deadly grip I threw my own strength and the strength of the demons of revenge that possessed me, until I could see the face beneath me grow purple, then black, as his jaw slowly dropped and the tongue protruded. His mouth closed with a sharp, convulsive snap, and I could hear the white teeth meet and grate together in the yielding flesh. And still I pressed with my whole strength the throat into which my fingers were sinking. I seemed to have but one all-absorbing desire, to squeeze the throat of my victim until I forced the eyes, already protruding so far, completely from their sockets. And so I pressed and pressed, never heeding that all sign of life had fled from the bloated, purple face beneath me, or that the body on which my knee was pressed was growing cold and rigid in death. Those fiendish eyes must come out—they must! they must! And I tried to put yet a little more force into the grip of iron, smiling exultantly when I thought they seemed to be protruding a half-inch farther than before. In my frenzied triumph I expected to see

them, could I but compress the villainous throat hard enough, shoot out of their sockets, as one sees the pulp of a grape pop out of the skin when it is squeezed.

Perhaps at this point the bottle of chloroform capsized in my pocket and some of the fluid leaked out, for its penetrating odour suddenly filled my nostrils, the room spun round as I gasped for breath, and all was darkness.

XIV.

They said in their evidence in court, that next morning they found me lying across the body of Arnold Rawdon, my fingers stiffened at his throat, and the nails so deeply sunk in the flesh that they had considerable difficulty in relaxing my grasp.

But I have saved my Ethel. I have taken the one course left for a desperate man, and I care nothing.

Five days from to-day the law has decreed that I shall die, "and may God have mercy on my soul!"

Five short days, and then, under the peremptory hand of the public executioner, I must quit the sweet, balmy air of the Shanghai spring, quit the glorious sunshine, and plunge into the vortex of death that is to whirl me—whither?

And yet I am resigned—nay, almost cheerful—in spite of contemplation of myself as the author of "the most heinous atrocity that has for years confronted the community of Shanghai." It is a stock phrase of theirs (do I not know the tricks of the trade?), and would be applied with equal glibness to the despatch of a chicken were the season slack and stirring news scarce. For, despite of the ban of

Justice, despite the fiat of condemnation that has gone forth against me, I feel that I have done a goodly act; and I know that did the world but learn the why and wherefore, it would applaud the deed, even as my conscience applauds.

This story I have determined shall be laid before it after my death, not before, for I cannot bring myself to believe that it will meet with credence when spread abroad, though stamped with the awful solemnity that belongs to the confession of a dying man. So rather than be pitied and branded a dangerous maniac, I have chosen the shorter shrift and an unhallowed grace.

If when my poor wife reads this manuscript, after I have paid the last penalty of the law, she will search my desk, Rawdon's note, written before I started for Chefoo, will be found I think beneath the bundle of English letters that are the last epistles I had from my aged mother before death claimed her. It will be the one slender proof I can bring forward, that what I here relate is the ghastly truth and not the wild fantasy of a demented brain.

I can hear, as I pause now, the monotonous tramp of the warder on the stone flags outside the iron-bound door, and I know, without looking up, when they cease for a moment, that the poor fool is peering in upon me through the grating lest I use the pen to do myself an injury. Perhaps I might, but that I have far more important work

for it to do; and what are five days more or less in the balance against eternity?

And what is the dreary waiting through the awful continuity and eternity itself for the sight of a face I shall never see, when by one swift stroke I have saved my innocent darling's honour and her life?

Will the good God, I wonder, look upon the deed as murder?

And yet—and yet—I bow my head and repeat in the solemn words of the judge, "May God have mercy on my soul! Amen."

CERBERUS.

Cerberus.

I WAS walking through the Hong-Kong Lunatic Asylum, when my attention was attracted to a gaunt, wild-eyed individual, who appeared to be stealthily following our every step. I am a nervous man, and the gleam of almost ferocious cunning in his eye disconcerted me. I mentioned the matter to my guide.

"Oh, he's quite harmless," said he confidently. "The poor fellow murdered his two children and slew a cat, the family pet, during a fit of insanity, brought on by excesses in some strange drug; but he's as docile as a lamb now."

He passed on, and a few moments after, while my guide's attention was diverted to some other part of the ward, I felt a light tap on the shoulder, and swung hastily round to find myself confronted by our friend of the previous encounter. He was gesticulating wildly, with a sly leer of intensest cunning at the warder's broadly-turned back, while he tried to thrust into my hand, with signs of great secrecy, a roll of paper.

In order to humour him, or more, perhaps, for fear of a scene should I exasperate him by a refusal, I accepted it with an equal show of profound secrecy, concealing it in my breast-pocket, at which he slunk away apparently well satisfied.

In the painful interest of the scenes I afterward witnessed I forgot completely the little bundle the madman had thrust into my hands, and it was not until evening, when searching my pockets for my cigarette case, that my hand found and drew forth the roll. I was about to throw it carelessly on the fire, as the idle freak of a demented mind, when my eye caught some writing on it, and I undid the string that bound it.

Judge of my surprise on finding that it was a genuine manuscript, consisting of several closely-written sheets of Asylum note-paper, the last three sheets crossed and re-crossed in a manner that called for considerable care in deciphering them.

Many years have passed since I first perused this manuscript and locked it away with a shudder in my desk.

I give it now to the world just as it stands, unaltered except for the insertion of a few stops where the maniac in his frantic haste had forgotten to punctuate it.

I have the less compunction in making this extraordinary revelation public, as I know that the principal actors in it have passed away to a larger

stage, and even in the memory of the older inhabitants of Shanghai, the details of that terrible crime will be but a misty, elusive recollection.

As to whether the madman's ghastly story is true or merely the hallucination of a disordered intellect, that seeks to account for what it has done, will never be known, and each must draw his own conclusions as to its probability.

* * * *

They say here that I am mad, the cowardly curs! pretending that I am not responsible for my actions, and so keep me incarcerated in durance against my will, nor will they allow me even to go to the wife of my bosom, who needs me, who *must* need me, in her loneliness and grief.

Oh, it is a terrible thing that a sane man should be thus helplessly in the power of eleven raving lunatics; for lunatics they are, insane, mad as the proverbial March hare. Yet they have the telling superiority of numbers, and we four of us must perforce submit with what grace we may to their wild fantasies. But I bear them no malice, only pity them; for do they not say that those with a mind unhinged ever fancy themselves sane, and everyone else mad? Therefore it is but natural that these poor souls, who call themselves "doctors" and "warders" should act as they do.

Just now they have power in their numbers, they are as three to one; but some day some of

them may be called away out of hearing of the others' cries, and the odds reduced; and then—— But it is not to tell of this, and so perhaps show them our hand, that I have purloined sheet after sheet of note-paper; for they allow me to write letters, though I am fully aware that the accurst hounds read them through and tear them up as they fall into their hands.

But a while ago I wrote a letter to the Prince of Wales, congratulating him on his recovery from a severe illness, and they told me they would post it.

Oh, they were cunning, those madmen, as madmen ever are! But I was more cunning than they, and outwitted them at their own game; for I watched and saw them read the letter to the end, then with a smile of devilish triumph tear it to bits and throw it away.

And when they told me they had posted it and I should have a reply in a few weeks, they thought that I believed them. But I was laughing slyly to myself, for *I knew.*

And this is the way they treat private correspondence with one's personal friends! Is this not proof enough, if proof were needed, that they are insane?

Even now, as I pen these lines, I can see them watching me with a fiendish leer, thinking I see them not; for when I look up they hastily turn their eyes away, trying to look unconcerned. And I know what they are waiting for; they are waiting

greedily for **me** to finish my letter, that they may find a moment's hellish amusement in its perusal ere **they** burn it.

But they will be disappointed, and I gloat ove their disappointment. Cunning as they are, they will be outwitted once again; for while they wait, with their smirking offers to post my letter, I quietly conceal the old sheet and commence a new, until I can see them wonder impatiently when it will be concluded.

Oh, the cunning of the maniacs is deep, but they are no match for *me!*

So they leer and watch and wait, while I go on calmly writing; for it is no mere letter I am indicting, but the relation of the events of a night so wildly horrible that I doubt the power of mortal language to express its profundity of horror.

Were I mad, as these raving lunatics grinning so derisively around me pretend, would I not have ample excuse for any mental aberration I might show?

But you shall hear my story and decide for yourself.

Some day, when we have succeeded in overpowering these maniacs and putting them under the restraint that should be their portion, and which with a fiendish refinement of cruelty they now inflict upon us, I may have the opportunity of placing these frightful facts before the world. Till then they must remain the gruesome possession of

him into whose hands these sheets may chance to fall.

It is many months or years ago—how many I cannot now say—that I was living contentedly with my wife and little baby-girl at Suva, the chief town of Viti-Levou, in the Fiji Islands. I had business in the law courts there; I was—I was— I cannot now remember what position I held. It is strange how unretentive my memory has become on some points, how clear, terribly, agonisingly clear on others.

I can remember that our beautiful house stood far out on the road that, passing through the town, skirts the shores of the bay and runs round the point, still beside the seashore, until it ends abruptly opposite to the two outlying islands that are used as a quarantine station for the Indian coolie immigrants. There were no other houses near us but one; that one belonged to a Doctor Wilson, a medical missionary connected with the London Mission. The next building was the little church, newly erected, which stood at the top of a steep hill leading up from the road beside the beach inland.

The first event connected with that epoch of horror, that will close only when the last fluttering breath has fled from my tortured body, was the finding of a little kitten.

The proprietor of the Pier Hotel and myself were strolling in the cool of the evening on the

jetty which stands almost opposite his establishment, and at which the steamers used to load fruit for the Australian mainland, when we heard a pitiful mewing coming from the vicinity of a crate of bananas that had arrived too late for shipment by the outgoing steamer, and had been left on the wharf for the night.

We both crossed to the spot, and shouldering aside the crate, disclosed a little kitten—if it was a kitten, and not a fiend in feline form—crouching in terror at our feet. It had evidently strayed ashore from the Union Company's steamer that had been lying there that day, and had been forgotten in the hurry of departure.

The loneliness and helplessness of the poor little thing appealed to me, so I told my companion of my intention of taking it home and caring for it. Picking it up in my arms, we turned and walked home, soothing the fears of the terrified little thing as we went.

And here, while cursing the devil-inspired impulse that prompted me to take the brute beneath our roof, let me pause to note a peculiarity in its appearance that at the time struck in my mind a note of ominous warning—a warning that, disregarded, has haunted my waking moments and been with me in my dreams ever since.

The creature was obviously quite young, yet of a remarkable size, with a head as large as that of a full-grown cat. But it was its colour, or rather the

absolute negation of colour, that struck me with vague, superstitious uneasiness as I raised it in my arms. It had been intended by Nature to be a black cat, or whatever animal it was; but instead of the glossy, lustrous coat one usually associates with such animals, this one's fur was a dead, dull black, without one glint of lustre. Black as soot, or the depths of the Plutonian night, with never a gleam of reflected sunlight, it absorbed the light that fell on it as in after years it absorbed the joy and sunlight from out my life. Nor was there a white hair about it to relieve the intense blackness of its body, while from out its head shone two large malignant green eyes, the iris of which, without any visible variation in the intensity of the light, expanded and contracted as it looked at you.

But it was its blackness—its horrible, sombre blackness—that in the first moment of our acquaintance almost repelled me. However, I felt compassion for its loneliness, and so in an evil moment I brought the kitten home.

My wife went into raptures of delight over the magnificent promise of the creature.

"Why," she cried, clapping her hands in childish glee, "it has a head big enough for three kittens!"

"Perhaps it is three heads rolled into one and covered with one skin," I replied with a fanciful smile.

My wife knitted her brows in thought and drummed impatiently on the table with her fingers.

"What," she asked at last, "was the name of that three-headed monster of olden times?"

"Cerberus," suggested I, "Pluto's famous hound?" Then, "The very thing!" I cried, well pleased with the idea, "we will call him Cerberus!"

"But Cerberus was a dog!" remonstrated my wife.

"No matter," I answered cheerfully, "he is black enough to atone for his feline descent."

So Cerberus he was called; and never surely did hell-hound more deserve to be posted for all eternity at the gates of Hades than did this monster.

I have said that our home stood just beyond the turning that led up to the church, which, together with the minister's house, were then the only buildings on that half-formed road. As was our frequent custom, my wife proposed that evening, after we had dined, that we should stroll up the hill and pay the parson a visit. His wife and she were close friends, and it was my habit to smoke a pipe with the parson, while his lady and mine discussed household matters.

Nothing would satisfy my wife this evening but that we must take Cerberus with us to be shown round, and we set out with our newly-acquired pet in my arms.

But neither the minister nor his wife were in the house; so thinking we might find them in the church next door, where a light glimmered, and

where we knew, it being a new edifice, they were wont to spend their evenings in the erection of the draperies, we crossed the little garden and went in. The tiny church, however, was as deserted as the house we had just left; as we walked through, no trace could we find of the truant pair we sought.

There had been a christening there during the day, and the font still stood with its sanctified water before me. What fiend of sacrilege urged me to it, I know not, but while my wife's back was turned I stepped to the font, and, dipping my hand in the sacred liquid, I liberally besprinkled the kitten I held, pronouncing as I did so, with hilarious profanity, the formula of baptism.

My wife, attracted by the kitten's vigorous protest, turned toward me, and with a look of consternation on her face, snatched the struggling little beast from my arms, exclaiming as she did so—

"Oh, Stanley, how can you be so wicked!"

But I laughed her fears lightly aside.

"It will give him a greater chance of growing up a good and a moral cat."

The entrance of the minister and his spouse put a stop to further discussion as to the rights of it; so leaving Cerberus to the ladies, who had already commenced a detailed survey of the trappings, we men retired to the house for a smoke and a chat.

Six months only had passed since our acquisition

of Cerberus, and he had grown into a magnificent cat. Already larger than any of the neighbouring tom cats he developed a fierceness that became known at all the feline conventions of the district, until very few gallant knights of the roof cared to court a dispute with him over a lady cat's favours. Nor was it only with antagonists of his own breed that he came to blows. He attacked dogs of any size or kind with a boldness and ferocity that in most cases caused the dog to remember that "he who fights and runs away will live to fight another day." In one or two of these encounters Cerberus got badly mauled, one in particular, in which a large bulldog was the participant, resulting in grave injury to our pet. He sent the bulldog away howling and blinded, one eye hanging by its tendons to the socket and the other terribly mutilated, but not before the dog had seized his head, and, as his teeth grazed down the skull, laid open the scalp from behind one ear to the vicinity of the opposite eye. The dog also succeeded in grasping with his teeth the cat's ear, the whole cartilage of which was torn away at the base of the skull, leaving the oral orifice gaping and unprotected. Cerberus, with his dead-black coat still without a particle of gloss, was now no handsome object, and he grew positively repulsive when one of his eyes became diseased and rotted away. The whole eye changed to nothing but a protuberant ball of white fat, in the middle of which, where the pupil might have

been, but slightly higher, was a splotch of vivid red with jagged edges, that gave the sightless orb the appearance of looking lugubriously up to heaven.

Visitors who saw him for the first time, positively shuddered at the repulsively demoniacal aspect of the brute with the livid, hairless scar across his head, one ear torn completely away, and that horrible, sightless eye, with its blood-red centre on the white ground, that seemed always to be glaring up into one's face. Add to this the lustreless intensity of his black coat, and one need feel no surprise that strangers avoided him. Yet to us he was gentleness itself and sagacious to an astonishing degree. He attended me wherever I went about the house, and on several occasions, when walking along the lonely road that led round the point, I was astonished to find Cerberus trotting contentedly at my heels. He had become much too well known by this time to have the slightest fear of molestation from passing dogs, while the Kanakas looked upon his hideous form with a superstitious dread that sent them scuttling across to the other side of the road when it became necessary to pass him.

Cerberus shared this affection for me with our little daughter, whom he would allow to pull his tail or box his ears with impunity, a liberty he would grant to no one else. Nor could anyone else approach him, as little May did, when he was eating. The Samoan servants could not pass within six feet of him at such times without

eliciting an ominous growl, and an erection of the hair on his neck, that boded ill to him who should dare to interfere with his repast. The child, on the other hand, he permitted to crawl up to him and actually to drag the bone that he was gnawing from between his claws without the faintest protest, while he waited, contentedly licking his lips, until such time as she should choose to restore it.

And now occurred another episode, trivial in itself, but which was destined to have a terrible influence for evil on my after life.

Doctor Wilson, of the London Mission, had just returned from his monthly medical tour of the principal islands that formed the inhabited portion of the Fijian Group, in the magnificent mission steam yacht the *John Williams* (going his morning rounds in his carriage, as he jocularly called it), and had come round to me for a smoke and to hear what had been going on in his absenee.

We were standing by the fireplace, our elbows on the mantel—for though it is never cool enough at Suva to warrant a fire, my wife had, when our house was being built, insisted on having fireplaces made in the rooms. "It makes them look so much more homelike," she had said. Even had we wanted to light a fire in the grate, it would have been an impossibility, for the chimneys were mere dummies, and did not pierce the roof. We were standing, I said, with elbows on the mantelpiece and backs to the grate, as though actually enjoying

the blaze, when the doctor drew from his waistcoat pocket something wrapped up in paper and handed it to me, asking—

"By the way, have you ever seen this stuff before?"

I unwrapped the paper and looked at it. It was a small globule of compressed greyish-brown powder, little larger than a pea, with a peculiarly pungent odour.

"What is it?" I asked suspiciously, as I fingered and smelt it, "some of your beastly physic?"

"No!" Wilson's style grew didactic. "That pilula is five moderately large doses of a narcotic drug which the natives claim holds the key to a temporary glimpse of paradise."

I laughed derisively.

"They all claim that charm," I sneered sceptically, "opium, bhang, haschish; they are all the same—all keys that fit the gates of paradise; and all are at best but ill-fitting skeleton keys, that draw back the bolt for an instant and irreparably injure the lock for ever after."

"Nevertheless, this drug is rather peculiar," said Doctor Wilson, with scientific enthusiasm, "in that it acts, so far as I can ascertain, directly on the cerebellum, paralysing all motion, while the cerebrum, the seat of the sensations and volition, is invigorated, and stimulated to greater activity."

"The consequence is——?" I prompted

"The consequence is, that while the thinking

and feeling part of the brain is unusually clear, the part that controls the motions of the muscles is utterly incapable of performing its functions, and the subject lies there, so to speak, dead drunk, so far as his body is concerned, but unusually sober in mind."

"Is that where the paradise comes in?" I queried, laughing, "being sottishly drunk and knowing clearly that you are drunk?"

Wilson shrugged his shoulders.

"What do they call it?" I asked, after a pause.

"Kandasie. It is made, I believe, from the roots of a tree, solely by an old chief at Levuka, who, since the British Government has peremptorily stifled his appetite for eating his fellow-natives, consoles himself with paralysing them."

I looked at the drug again and sniffed it.

"How do they take it?"

"I believe the conventional method is to crumble a few grains and allow it to dissolve on the tongue, swallowing a few mouthfuls of water after it."

"Poison?" I asked again.

"No," he replied, "that is the curious thing about it. The natives swear that no quantity of it will kill; and I, personally, have been making experiments with very large doses on rabbits and dogs. An unusually large dose appears to prolong the period of catalepsy, but the subject wakes up apparently more refreshed than before he went under its influence.

"It is a deeply-interesting drug, and I should like——" he was continuing, when a deep growl from Cerberus under the table caused him hastily to drop the pilula into an empty ash-tray that stood near him on the mantelpiece and swing round in consternation, exclaiming—

"By Jove! I forgot all about your beauty of a cat, and brought my Gyp in with me!"

In the ensuing distraction of our frantic efforts to prevent Cerberus attacking and demolishing the little terrier the baleful drug was forgotten.

"I don't believe that brute is a cat at all!" exclaimed the doctor, when after infinite trouble he had succeeded in capturing the sorely-threatened Gyp and imprisoning him in his arms, while I thrust Cerberus unceremoniously out at the door.

"What is it, then?" I inquired with a smile.

"Goodness knows! But I should think, judging by its size and ferocity, that there is more of the panther than the cat about it."

Wishing me a hasty "good night," he went out with his dog, leaving the pilula where in his agitation he had let it fall, and it was not until I was about to retire that I bethought me of it.

I had no mind to allow it to remain where it was, and run the possible risk of its falling into the hands of little May. Despite the doctor's assurances that it was in nowise a poison, it was an experiment I felt disinclined to see tried upon

my child; so I took the drug up to my bedroom with me.

I was taking a last cursory survey of it, before depositing it in safety in a drawer for the night, when a horrible, seemingly irresistible curiosity, demon-inspired, prompted me to court the experience of a new sensation.

I glanced through the open door into my wife's room; she was sleeping soundly, and with a fascination I did not attempt to combat, I examined the drug anew.

This was the turning-point in my life. Had I but thrust the vile temptation aside at that fateful moment, I should yet have been a prosperous man, happy in the love of my children, instead of the physical wreck, under the fiendish dominion of madmen, that I now am.

Deaf to the warning voice within, that cried out to me not to trifle with so potent a bondage, I crushed a few grains of powder into my palm and placed it, not without some trepidation, on my tongue. It dissolved with a sharp, acrid taste, and as I inhaled the pungent fumes generated in my mouth a violent fit of hiccoughs convulsed my frame, until I had hurriedly to seize the water-bottle from my wash-stand and swallow with avidity the major portion of the cooling liquid.

Then I lay down and waited calmly, yet curiously, for the drug to act.

Suddenly a fearful throbbing commenced in m·

brain, growing louder and more distressing each moment, until it resembled the whirr of the wheels in a child's clockwork toy. I felt frightened and repentant, and strove to call for assistance, but my tongue clave to the roof of my mouth, and no sound but a horrible rattling issued from my throat. Frightful, racking pains shot through my body and limbs, traversing it in every direction, as though it would tear me asunder, and I groaned in anguish.

After a while the whirring of wheels in my giddy brain seemed to be growing fainter and more distant, as a cold, clammy sweat broke out over me and stood in beads upon my brow. "Could these be the pangs of approaching death?" I asked myself in vague terror. The maddening whirr became slower and slower, then gradually subsided to a pulsating tic-tack, tic-tack, not unlike the same clockwork toy that has nearly run its course. I struggled to raise my hand to my face, but the frantic struggle I dreamed I was making existed but in my mind, for the muscles were rigid as iron bands, and not the fraction of an inch could I stir. The pulsing ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and I felt myself sinking down—down—down!

And now a great quietness fell upon me, and I lay calm and peaceful as a sleeping babe, my eyes wide open, and everything around me distinct and clear. But a marvellous change had come over the once familiar objects that surrounded me.

Rings of beautiful light, concentric, revolving, hovered in the air, and a soft, ruby iridescence diffused itself over everything around, while flames and jets of bright parti-coloured splendour played fitfully in and out among the ornaments of my dressing-table.

I lay watching the play of gorgeous colours in a trance of beatific delight impossible to describe. This was indeed the Empyrean, the region of pure fire, of which the old Greeks dreamed, but having not the secret of kandasie, failed to realise.

I quivered with intensity of delight, as my spirit leapt forth to meet the trailing vapours of bright-hued glory that hovered around me. Never before had my eyes beheld or my mind conceived as possible, such exquisite harmony of colours, such rich blending of magnificent hues. Yet every object in the room was distinct. I could see, as I lay there in ecstatic enjoyment of the miraculous display, the multi-coloured curtains wavering to and fro in the fitful breeze. More, *I could think clearly and calmly—could reason!* But all was transformed, glorified, with the grandeur of tint the poet's brightest dream pictures as painted by the hand of the Creator on the clouds of paradise.

How long this æsthetic feast of colour lasted I know not; but I slowly and gradually sank from the sublime heights of Elysium, to which my soul had soared, into a restful doze, and when I stirred again my limbs were free.

But how sordidly cheerless the room looked after my brief flight through the Empyrean! I lay with half-closed eyes, shivering with disgust and loathing. My first impulse was to fly again for refuge to the drug; life seemed not worth living on this sordid earth after the brief glimpse of God's Possible, snatched through the agency of kandasie. And here it was that the terrible, malignant power of the drug made itself felt. It was not merely the attraction of a few hours of divine mental elation, but a corresponding repulsion from all that before I had been able to tolerate, if not enjoy. It was the comparison of the tawdry, sober-hued earth with the bright-tinted vapours of ineffable glory, that made me long to fly again to the embrace of kandasie.

Need I say that ere a week was out I was completely, recklessly, under the charmed spell of the fiendish thing—that I was as firmly riveted to the seductive allurements of kandasie as ever was lover attracted to his divinity's side.

Soaring on my newly-acquired vision-wings only during the stilly hours of the night, I had thought that I could evade discovery indefinitely. But one night my wife came into my room to tell me of something that had slipped her memory during the evening, and found me lying stark and stiff, pulse and respiration reduced to its minimum. I was perfectly conscious of all that went on, and longed to be able to make some sign to assure my wife

that all was well, but even a slight movement of the eyes was denied me. I heard her exclamation of horror as she bent over me and tried, with dread in her face, to shake me gently into wakefulness. I heard her hasty summoning of the servants and the hurried directions to one to fetch Dr. Wilson. At this I raved in silent fury. Dr. Wilson would see at once what was the matter—that the fit my wife thought I had fallen into was nothing but the effects of kandasie. He would probably remember, too, that he had left the little globe of powder there when he departed in such haste, and I dreaded his knowing I was a victim to the thing.

Why had I not confided in my wife? I asked myself wildly, as I lay there awaiting his arrival. I should have told her, and she would have understood, and so saved this humiliating exposure. Yet it was nothing to be ashamed of; it was not harmful, like opium or morphine.

But fortune favoured me. Dr. Wilson had been called away to an urgent case in the neighbouring Island of Kandavu, some sixty miles from Suva, and the boy had had to ride on to the only other medical man in the place, the prison doctor, who dwelt on the gaol premises at the far extremity of the bay.

By the time he arrived the effects of the dose had passed away, and I roughly told my wife to leave the matter in my hands, and not to mention a word about my symptoms. When the doctor

came, I passed the matter off lightly, as having been a fainting fit, which my wife in her solicitude had taken much too seriously.

The poor man went off, grumbling deeply at having been brought all that distance for nothing, while I—I felt relieved that the matter had passed off so easily. But confession was necessary, if I was to avoid a similar contingency in the future, so I reluctantly took my wife into my confidence. She was inexpressibly shocked at first, until I had assured her again and again of the utter harmlessness of the drug. Then as I convinced her, dilating on the entrancing visions the drug conjured up, she evinced a desire to try some herself; but this I peremptorily declined to allow, and my determined stand against her wishes helped me to realise that perhaps the drug was not so innocuous as I had tried to make myself believe.

Thus a year passed away. I had to send my Samoan boy periodically to Levuka, on the Island of Ovalau, a distance of thirty-eight miles, when the necessity arose of replenishing my stock of kandasie.

Cerberus meanwhile had grown into a magnificent albeit repulsive animal, but his gentleness to ourselves was extraordinary, and was the cause of frequent comment by our friends, who shrank from him in fear and disgust. He was now twice the size of the largest cat I have ever known, and was beginning to be a little troublesome, in that he had

got into the habit of now and again making a meal off the fowls belonging to the neighbouring natives; yet they stood far too much in dread of the sombre brute with the one saturnine eye, to do more than lodge a feeble plaint with us about his depredations.

About this time my house was gladdened by the birth of a son. Everything went well until the christening ceremony, when, as the minister was about to dip his hand into the font, my wife suddenly paled, and uttering a quick, half-sobbing cry, snatched the infant back to her breast.

There was a slight stir of astonishment among the onlookers, as the minister gently disengaged the babe from the arms of its trembling mother, but without further untoward incident the ceremony came to a close.

On my angrily asking my wife at the finish of the service the reason for her singular behaviour, she told me she could not bear the thought of her baby being baptised at the same font that I had desecrated by my mockery of christening Cerberus. Something, she said, had warned her as she stood there that it was wrong, that evil would come of it, harm to the child.

I laughed derisively at her childish superstition, but I had noticed that the animal had trotted behind us to the church, and crouching beneath an unoccupied pew, had been an interested spectator of the scene. At the time it had given me no

concern, for Cerberus had often followed me out of doors; but now a vague uneasiness, a dim sense of foreboding, that I could not at the time account for, settled upon me as I pondered. I look back on that time now from the ghastly clearness of after-knowledge, and wonder that I could not have divined the cause; but I put it down to a slight morbidness of fancy, brought about probably by the reaction of my master-drug, and the incident was all but forgotten.

My wife, however, from the time of our little son's birth, took a strange dislike to the cat that had once been such a favourite. Not that she ever alluded in my presence to the change in her feelings, I doubt if she even acknowledged it to herself; but once, when together we went up to take a loving look at the little stranger, and found Cerberus sitting on a chair close by, gazing appreciatively with his solitary eye at the cradle, my wife gave a startled little scream, and utterly forgetful for the moment of everything, rushed forward, and, seizing the gigantic cat, dragged him to the door and thrust him out. For a moment she stood panting, looking in wild alarm round the room, the next she had recovered herself, and was trying in evident confusion to laugh away her peculiar fright.

Cerberus she said, with a smile that trembled about the corners of her mouth, had looked so like an evil spirit as he sat there with that horrible

blind eye and one ear gone, that, womanlike, she had not stopped to reason.

And now I was transferred by the Colonial Office at home to Hong-Kong; but as to how long we stayed there or the incidents of that period of my life I confess my mind a blank.

I know that we brought Cerberus with us, though we had to come from Suva to Melbourne, thence to Sydney, and so to Hong-Kong. I know also that my wife begged me not to bring him with us, implored me to give the brute away; but she could advance no definite motive for her wish to be rid of him, only that she was afraid of him, so I laughed away her fears and Cerberus accompanied us.

I can remember also that we lived high up from the sea, so different from our former house that stood almost level with the waters of the little bay at Suva. Here we could look down on the harbour with its shipping, and the great steamers seemed like a child's discarded toys lying here and there on the blue floor.

Then we came to Shanghai.

Here again I strive earnestly, yet vainly, to recall why we so suddenly left Hong-Kong. I have a dim, haunting notion that it was in some way connected with my infatuation for kandasie, for I was now habitually fettered in the shackles of the drug. Sometimes I find myself trembling on the verge of recollection, and I pause, laying aside my pen;

but as my mind leaps forward to grasp the elusive memory, it recedes again into the black abyss of utter forgetfulness. I recollect, or dream that I recollect, seeing my gentle wife looking at me with saddened eyes in which lurked something akin to fear; and once, coming upon her unawares, I found her sobbing bitterly—why I could not tell, nor would she enlighten me. On finding herself thus discovered, she hastily dried away the tears, and with a tremulous little smile said "God would bring it all out right in the end." God? Were He not powerless to meddle in things mundane, would He leave me here in the absolute power of maniacs, who will not even allow me to communicate by letter with my friends outside?

At Shanghai we took up our residence in a small flat in Grange Road, and here for a time life ran smoothly, for I was freed somehow from my irksome duties at the Courts, and I never went to the office any more.

Yet one haunting dread I had, that my kandasie, my precious drug, would run out, and that I would be unable to obtain more. I had brought what seemed an ample supply with me on leaving Fiji, but as my system became slowly inured to its action, I found myself with dismay compelled to consume it in ever-increasing doses before the languorous sensation of beatitude would creep over my spirit. Though physically well enough, mentally I was in a state of constant rebellion at the tawdry, cold

cheerlessness of my surroundings, after the glorious brightness of my visions; finding myself eagerly looking forward to the time when I might lie down to the enjoyment of the entrancing bondage that chained me; ever less able to resist the temptation to advance the hour of my temporary release from dull earth by a few minutes at first, then by half an hour, latterly by leaps of an hour at a time.

And now I come to the part of my history that is stamped upon my brain, every little act of it, in letters of fire, more brilliantly inexpungable than the glowing incandescence of the dream-fires themselves.

Would to God—if God there be—that I could forget something of that awful night—that my memory could slip but one iota, but one little incident of those dread hours of horror, and so lessen, be it by ever so little, the terrible burden of white-glowing recollection that is slowly searing its way into my brain, driving me to madness as certain as the lunacy of these leering curs around me who call themselves "doctors" and "warders!"

But I cannot forget. Not one instant of that time can I shut out from before my burning eyes; not one sound I heard in that fearful charnel-house of death can I restrain from hammering its way anew, and ever anew, through my ears to my throbbing, bursting brain!

Other things I can forget. Things I have desired

to remember have slid from me into the Cimmerian darkness of oblivion; but the memory of this dread night stays with me, and will stay with me until the angels mercifully wash it from my mind with the lethe of eternal rest.

A cousin of my wife's was coming out to Shanghai, and it was arranged that I should go to meet the boat at Woosung. My wife also would have come; but she did not care to leave the children alone, perhaps for the whole day.

She was to come out by the SS. *Hamburg*, but when we heard of the vessel's departure from Hong-Kong we found that she was not due at Woosung until late in the evening. This would probably mean coming back by the special night-train. But to me it would mean infinitely more; it would mean the retardation of the only moments of happiness I now enjoyed, by several hours. The thought was unbearable—to defer the courting of the blissful colour visions by several hours! I could not do it. I shrank from the mere contemplation of such dire hardship, and, wretch that I am, I complained that our coming visitor was a nuisance, that I was not feeling particularly well, and so forth, knowing full well that if I showed any reluctance to going, my wife would be ready to offer to go herself.

Which she did. Of course I demurred. It was my place to go to Woosung, and I could not allow

her to tax herself with the journey, and so I allowed myself reluctantly to yield.

She went down in the early forenoon, lest the boat should arrive unexpectedly; but as by four she had not yet been signalled at Gutzlaff Lighthouse my wife wired to me that she intended to stay at the Woosung Hotel, in order to be upon the spot on the vessel's arrival in the morning.

What cared I, I thought, though she had to stay down there a week, so I were left in company of my kandasie.

Before I went to bed that night—which, in the delights of anticipation, was much earlier than usual—I had the children's little cots moved into my room, so that I might be the better able to keep an eye upon them.

I keep an eye on them forsooth! Sometimes I laugh out wildly at the sheer humour of the thing. Were it not for the pitiable imbecile calling himself "warder," who seems to watch my every movement, I could lay down my pen now and laugh anew.

But I digress. In my anxiety to lose no moment of the precious time, it must have been full three hours earlier than usual that I dismissed the amah and "boys" and lay down, after first swallowing, with placid satisfaction, my accustomed potion.

I remember—ah, how well I remember!—as I lay there waiting for the drug to waft my spirit

away, seeing Cerberus pacing with stealthy step to and fro in the room.

Twice he stopped and raised his head with a savage snarl, so that I wondered much at his conduct, fearing he might awake the little ones who now slumbered so peacefully beside me.

Gradually the sombre tints about the room began to brighten, and I knew that kandasie was catching my spirit up in its alluring power. The gas-jet first caught the glamour of colour as I saw a beautiful halo of deepest purple and vivid scarlet playing round the brilliant golden flame.

I felt my limbs were growing rigid, for my hand was hanging over the side of the bed, and as Cerberus stopped his stealthy pacing and came up to lick it, I tried to remove it from the rasp of his tongue, but could not.

Then, as my brain grew to its accustomed clearness under the stimulating influence of the narcotic, I remembered with a pang of remorse that in my eagerness to attain the summit of my gilded Parnassus I had forgotten to feed the poor brute. It was a task either my wife or myself invariably undertook, for we dared not at such times trust his savage temper with the Chinese boys. Cerberus was getting old and cantankerous, and at the best of times he was a dangerous brute when meals occupied his attention. And I had forgotten to feed him! I felt sorry for him, for he had but the one meal a day; and now he would get nothing

until the following morning, for the lightest movement was already beyond me.

So Cerberus went on licking my hand, until I felt his rough tongue rasping away the tender skin from a recent wound on its back. But I did not heed it, could not heed it, for I was wrapt in ecstatic contemplation of the iridescent colours playing before my entranced eyes, and every muscle was stiff and immobile.

Suddenly, I know not how long after, I became dimly conscious that, through the parti-coloured rings of light, Cerberus was standing on the bed at my little May's feet, his hair bristling, his tail lashing the great black sides in angry, spasmodic strokes! The one green eye was glaring fixedly toward the head of the bed; the blind one, as usual, staring up with its patch of jagged crimson to the ceiling.

While I yet watched, my eyes set immovably in their sockets, the pendulum swing of the tail ceased, and the great black body crouched low on the bed for a spring. I felt a sensation of eerie alarm gripping at my heart, though I did not then realise its meaning. It was a premonition of coming disaster, that subsided ere it could be translated into fear.

What was the matter with Cerberus, I wondered, and as I wondered I saw, mixed up with the flashing colours, a huge, shadowy body stretched to its full length as it launched itself through the air.

Only for an instant, then it alighted full on my little girl's breast, its giant head partly hid under little May's chin. She awoke from her pleasant dreams with a scream of terror, a peculiar, gurgling cry that seemed stifled and compressed in its utterance.

What did it mean? I asked myself again, lying there in rigid immobility. She had never been afraid of Cerberus's caresses. I could see in the dim light her blue eyes, widely open, staring wildly, protuberantly upwards. I longed to get up and see what was the matter, but I was bound, fettered.

Presently the slight body beneath the sheets quivered and writhed, and the form of the cat, nestling so close above her, rocked, yet its head remained down.

What did it mean?

Then slowly the little pulse that remained in my inert body stopped, and my eyes grew dim and clouded with horror. Cerberus had his great yellow fangs buried in my child's throat, and was greedily drinking her life's blood!

The dream-colours were growing deeper now on the white coverlet—growing crimson that before had been palest gold; crimson, sprinkled and scattered. No! no! no! This was no vision! This was real! O God! O God! my little May's blood! And I lay there staring, staring——

A deep growl recalled me from my swoon of

anguish, and the mists that were gathering before my eyes ran back again into nothingness.

The ghoulish creature was standing erect, its tail swinging again from side to side, the fangs and cruel, snarling lips imbued in gore. Then it stooped its head, and, fixing the terrible claws in her tender flesh, gripped with its teeth the slender throat of my child. And I—I lay there in all the rigidity of death, yet without the merciful oblivion death bestows, watching with appalling clearness this monster deliberately rending and tearing the throat of a human being, and that being — my child!

My reason must have tottered for a moment in its seat, for I began to seek excuses for the grisly deed.

Poor Cerberus! Good Cerberus! He was thirsty and hungry; he had not been fed. Good, gentle Cerberus! Perhaps now he would come and tear open my throat, and dim my eyes again to the horror before them.

But no! He went on rending the white flesh, and there came to my ears the soft rasping of skin and flesh being torn asunder. Presently he raised himself erect once more and looked around. His eye fixed itself on the neighbouring cot, and, with angrily-lashing tail, he sprang across the space that separated the little baby from May, alighting by its side and commencing leisurely to lick the face and throat of the sleeping infant.

My God! not that! I shrieked, yet shrieking, uttered no sound. I fancied I was wringing my hands in my anguish, yet my limbs were motionless and stiff. Not that! not that! Spare me at least my baby—my little innocent child!

The baby awoke at the touch of his tongue, and smiled confidingly up into the blood-smeared face above, crowing with infant delight, whilst I lay in that frightful nightmare existence watching—watching, with stilled pulses, for the time when, tired of his play, the fiend would——

Suddenly I saw the shoulder-blades project from his back as he set himself against the pull. Then the same insistent, ripping sound, the same raw, nauseating odour of fresh blood as he tore causelessly at the tiny throat—causelessly, from sheer ferocity and lust of blood, for he was long surfeited with the holocaust.

Little spots of chameleon hue, tinted by the rainbow-vision colours, were appearing silently on the floor; I knew not whence they came, for I saw them only as they showed forth on the boards. Then the colours faded swiftly away, faded, all but one; that one was crimson. I saw their origin—it was the spurting blood of my babe. I could detect it now in its crimson stream as it rose from the bed and fell in gory fountain through the air. The spots on the floor had run together and formed a pool, and still I gazed wide-eyed and could not stir.

I prayed madly, frantically to God. Ah, how I prayed for but one moment of that glad, free movement that hitherto I had despised, that I might tear the monster from my little one's throat! And when He would not hear me, when He in callous apathy turned His back upon me, I prayed to the demons, the fiends beneath whose bondage I groaned, to grant me, their slave, one minute's respite from the fetters that shackled my limbs in utter helplessness. I prayed that it might at least be given me to close my eyes, to shut out the sight of the ghastly tragedy that was being enacted before them. Oblivion, blindness, death itself, I cared not what so I should not be compelled to gaze upon this foul harpie of Eblis in its horrible carnage.

O God! how joyously I would have welcomed death at that moment! How I would have smiled and striven to kiss the hand that dealt me the stroke of mercy. I tried in my anguish to imagine that I felt the stilly langour of death stealing over my spirit, that to my failing sight the room was growing dim and indistinct, but I could not; every object, every little spurt and splash of blood shone out bright and clear.

There was but one tint, all pervading, the hue of my children's blood. Revolving rings within rings, fires that leapt and flashed around my babes' bodies, all were red, red!

Suddenly something within my brain snapped;

there was a loud report, that reverberated through and through my being, and on its fading echoes, amid a whirring of grinding, tearing wheels, I sank away into——

I was crouching by the bedside, beside the stiffened corpses of my little children, laughing low as I dabbled my hands in the rapidly-clotting gore, raising great strings of it between my fingers to the light, when next morning the boy came into the room and retreated again in terror to the flat below.

Cerberus was lying curled at the foot of May's bed, glutted and content, purring loudly as he drifted off into a sleep of satiety. Very gently I caressed him, coaxed him to the other end of the bed, laughing softly the while.

At last I had lured him on to May's still breast, and he lay there purring forth his satisfaction, the gory head resting on her smooth, blood-stained forehead.

Very gently, ever laughing, I disengaged from either side the child's head a thick tress of golden-bright hair, now stained so deeply, and rank with the reeking odour of earth and rawness.

Very gently, laughing still, I knotted them loosely over the great cat's neck, retaining the two ends in my hands. Then, with a last exultant shriek of triumph, I threw my whole strength into the effort, and drew the insidious strands of curly hair tight about the ghoul's throat.

It was then that I received the fearful scratches that now disfigure my arms and breast. But I never for an instant released my hold, never relaxed so glorious a game, but drew the strands ever tighter and tighter, until gradually the wildly-clawing paws were stilled, as with a last spasmodic struggle and a violent shivering the hideous fiend stretched his sombre body in death above the corpses of my children.

My blood was flowing freely now, mingling on the bed with the clotted gore of the little ones, but I heeded it not. I laughed in glee to see the glassy green eye protruding so far from the monster's head, as far, or farther, than the sightless white one with the crimson splash.

I think then several persons burst into the room; I cannot remember. I think there was a scuffle as they tried to drag me from the bedside. It is all so long ago now, months or perhaps years, I must be forgetting.

But every few nights that ghoulish black thing comes creeping stealthily through the closed door, through the wall, anywhere, and, clambering upon my bed, lies a dead weight across my breast and throat, half-suffocating me as I stare in terror up at the hideously-deformed head, with its one protruding orb of blank, red-splashed tissue and malignant green eye.

And in its fulsome breath, as it purrs loudly into my face, I smell again the reeking blood of my

little children, and though I shriek in horror and cry out piteously to them to come in God's name and take the frightful thing away, they only stand at my bedside leering at me with a smile of bitter mockery, and tell me I am mad.

Mad! The hounds! Could I have set forth this terrible story with such lucidity were I mad?

THE "LEONID."

The "Leonid."

THEY were sitting in the cabin of the second officer of the *Cracksang*, at Cheemoy, recalling memories of the first Jubilee.

"I was just out of my teens then," concluded the white-haired consul's constable, after a reminiscence.

"I say, chuck it," remonstrated the second, "I was no giddy chicken myself in eighty-seven."

The consul's constable eyed him with nascent indignation, then his eyes twinkled.

"Now, how old would you put me down to be?" he asked presently.

The second officer looked him critically over.

"Well, wishing to flatter you, I should start the bidding at fifty."

"And you?" he turned to the first.

"I should go five better," returned that individual.

The consul's constable smiled a little smile that softened for the moment the haggard lines of his face.

"I suppose you 'd be surprised if I told you I was only thirty-four?" he asked.

"I 'd be more than surprised," the second assured him, "I 'd be jolly well incredulous."

"Nevertheless," mused their visitor, "there are some things that age a man more in a week than ten years of ordinary living can."

"Whisky 's one," murmured the first, "taken inconsiderately."

The consul's constable saw the need of vindication.

"Did you ever have a meteorite fall near you at sea?" he questioned.

"Can't say I have."

"Well, I will tell you about one."

But the second held up his hand, entreating delay, and bellowed "booy!"

When the China boy made his appearance he pointed desolately to the empty glasses; then, while their visitor held his new-filled glass to the light and gazed at it with the critical eye of the connoisseur, the second coiled himself up more comfortably on the settee, and the first swung into the bunk.

The consul's constable absorbed the moisture on the inside of his glass and looked up.

"What do you want—the yarn of the *Leonid?*"

"We want to know why you are thirty-four instead of sixty-four," the second told him severely.

"Well, it happened more than ten years ago, when I was a scatter-brained, devil-may-care youngster like yourself."

The second officer smiled indulgently.

"Steady as she goes," he murmured.

"And held the appointment of third mate in a little coaster owned by a syndicate of wealthy Chinese merchants. We were manned much the same as you, white officers and engineers, China crew, and Malay quartermaster, and used to run down to Saigon and Java, or anywhere that the kind fates offered a decent cargo.

"At the time of the occurrence of which I am to tell you we were on our way up from Bangkok to Hong-Kong. It was a fine, starlit night, and my eight to twelve watch on the bridge of sighs. I was leaning over the rail looking up at the constellation of Orion, some of the stars of which were crossing the meridian about that time, and wondering if it were worth while taking a couple of altitudes, when I saw a shooting star shine out near Betelgeuse, and travel across the heavens.

"One is always more or less interested in a brilliant meteorite, and as I watched this one its angular motion seemed to be getting slower and slower and the star growing brighter.

"A moment after I realised, with a start, that it had left the tangent on which it was moving, and was travelling straight toward us.

"By this time it was far brighter than Venus at her best, and I was debating in my mind whether I should slip down and give the skipper a shake-up, when there came a blinding glare, with a sudden

glow of intense heat in my face, followed almost instantly by a terrific explosion that made the old ship reel and tremble from truck to keelson, as the meteorite plunged into the sea a couple of miles on the starboard bow.

"Little enough need was there then to call anybody, for the whole ship's company from the captain to the cook's boy came pouring up on deck inquiring with scared faces what had happened.

"While I still clung to the bridge rails, blinded by the light that had so swiftly been extinguished, and half stunned by the concussion, a dense bank of steam or something rolled like a pall over our ship, the lights flickered for a little and went out, and we found ourselves in impenetrable darkness.

"But this was not the worst. We had turned the ship's head to windward with the idea of steaming out of the fog, but before the engines had made a dozen revolutions, first one began to cough then another. We felt a choking sensation, followed by ever-increasing difficulty of breathing; and as the sulphurous fumes got denser, we lost our heads in the terror of this unknown thing, and panic reigned.

"I can recollect as I fought desperately in that utter blackness for breath, seeing one of the quartermasters rush past, shrieking like mad. Then a Chinaman dashed himself blindly against me, recoiled and fell howling to the deck, where he writhed and gasped, tearing wildly at his throat with both his hands.

"Groping my way along the bridge, I tried to get down the ladder leading to the main deck, missed my footing, and fell several feet landing at last on something soft. It was darker still here, but I seemed to breathe a little easier, and feeling round with my hands, I concluded I must be in the lower hold. In my panic I had slipped through the ladder rail, and plunged, feet first, down one of the cowls that ventilated the lower hold.

"No, you needn't look at me. I know very well I'd stand a good chance of sticking half-way now. I was slimmer then."

"Granted!" said the second impatiently. "Go on with the yarn."

"Well, luckily for me, I had come down on bags of rice, and though a good bit shaken, was unhurt. The hold was only two-thirds full, so there was ample standing-room between the bags and the 'tween decks.

"As I sat, half-dazed, under the ventilator, wondering how I was to get up again, the terrible, choking vapour came pouring down on me, threatening soon to make the hold as deadly as the deck I had so precipitately left. There was not much time to think matters over. I saw that if I wanted time to draw many more comfortable breaths I must stuff that ventilator up; so, drawing my knife, I slit three or four bags, emptied the rice out, and jammed them with all my strength up the shaft.

"Then, stumbling across the bags, I did the same with the port ventilator, and when I had got them as air-tight as I could I found I could breathe with comparative freedom.

"There I resolved to wait until that beastly fog cleared up a bit; but the No. 2 hold of a thousand-ton steamer is none too big to be pleasant, particularly when it is nearly full, so I told myself I didn't care how soon the vapour cleared away, and gave me the chance of getting out without choking myself.

"While I sat there wondering what they were doing on deck, straining my ears to catch the slightest sound, I fancied the regular beat of the propeller was getting slower. Five minutes after I was sure they were slowing her down on deck, and after another half-hour the engines seemed to be hardly moving.

"What was the idea, I wondered, of slowing her down so gradually?

"While I was still trying to account for this the engines gave a convulsive throb, swung for a moment or two over their centres, then stopped altogether.

"Still I could hear no sound from the deck, nothing but the swish of the water against the ship's sides as she rose and fell on the light swell that was running.

"One can't stand that sort of suspense for long, with nothing but the monotonous lap of the water

to be heard, so I got up and pulled the bags to one side, with the intention of sending up a hail for a rope. But a downward rush of deadly gas made me stuff them up again as hard as I could, and sit down again with more of fear in my heart than I had felt when I came down here.

"Then it had been hot, unreasoning panic; but now I felt that something had gone wrong. I must have heard them moving about on deck if they had not left the ship, and why would they want to leave her? Had anything happened after that fog came along?

"Look at it which way I would, it was no pleasant predicament I found myself in, cooped up in the hold in blank darkness and utter silence, except for the wash; but I dared not tackle that ventilator again until the vapour had cleared, so there was nothing to do but wait. I tell you, though, I felt like a youngster who is locked up in a dark cellar and doesn't know what is going to happen next.

"I hung out like that for the rest of that night, and when I thought morning had come I tried the ventilator again. The air had cleared a good deal, but a violent fit of coughing warned me of the impossibility of gaining the deck.

"All that day I waited, suffering agonies of thirst, and slowly the following night dragged itself away. A racking pain in my head and a tightness across the chest as of slowly-contracting iron bands proved to me pretty forcibly that the confined air of the

hold was becoming unbreathable, that I must make another attempt to get up on deck, or perish miserably where I stood.

"It was about ten in the morning, as nearly as I could judge, when I came to the final decision of getting out of this, even if it should mean out of the frying-pan into the fire. I pulled the bags down and looked up. The air seemed clear enough, and the bit of sky I could see was blue and tranquil, but there was still a distinct trace of the sulphurous fumes of yesterday in the air.

"Anyhow, it looked more promising than the hold. But how was I to reach there? To climb up that narrow shaft was out of the question, some other way had to be found. I found a way by standing on the iron hold-ladder, and, with what little strength remained to me, pushing aside one of the 'tween-deck hatches sufficiently to scramble through.

"I found myself, stiff and sore, in the 'tween decks, but there still remained the main-deck hatches overhead, and these must be battened down, else the gas would have filtered through. There could be no chance of raising them, and I spent a fruitless hour in hammering on them with a piece of dunnage wood in the hopes of their hearing me on deck.

"As I sat resting and considering what was best to be done, I remembered the little skylight with glass flaps on th foredeck. This skylight had

for the stars seem to be rushing down on me, burning into my brain like balls of fire, and I catch myself listening, trembling, again for that terrific explosion that was the commencement of the horror which in three short days transformed me from a light-hearted youngster into the decrepit old man you say I look."

THE END.

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furnaces, and had to take her in tow to Saigon.

"There the Chinese merchants, her owners, directed that the ill-fated vessel should be sold for whatever she would fetch, and the whole lot paid over to the Messageries Company as salvage, adding that they must decline to entertain any further correspondence on the subject of the 'bad-joss' ship. I don't know what became of her after that; she must have been sent home, she never would have been of further use in Eastern waters, marked down as she was as a 'devil-joss ship.'

"When I came out of hospital, the British Consul at Saigon had me sent on to Hong-Kong as a D.B.S., and there they wanted me to go home, but I would not go, and so I drifted up here and got this job."

"Why didn't you want to go home?" asked the first.

"To tell you the truth, my nerves were too shattered to stand the sea voyage. Even coming across from Saigon I was shivering like a scared horse all the way."

"But how about going home later on?" asked the second.

"I shall never go," he replied sadly; "the mere thought of the sea sets me shuddering. You may think it folly, but even here on dry land I dare not, if I am alone, look up at that group of Orion,

Frenchman, and used to come and see me at the military hospital in the Rue Chasseloup Loubat, where they took me with brain-fever, every time the ship came to Saigon.

"He spoke a fair amount of English, and what I made out about it was this.

"He had been very much surprised on clambering up from the boat to find the main deck deserted, and that pink powder I told you of scattered all round. Spying a Chinaman apparently asleep on the hatch, he walked up to him, and to his horror found him to be dead. As he hurried up to the lower bridge, he passed two more dead Chinamen, and on the bridge itself the engineers, lying as I have described.

"At the break of the bridge he found me, and seeing that I was still alive, sent the boat back for the surgeon.

"They carried me aboard the *Gascoigne* insensible, and sent back a crew and two engineers to try and get up steam again. They had first to give the ship's company decent burial, and the second of the *Gascoigne* said it was about the most gruesome job he ever thought of doing.

"Several of the men turned green about the gills over it and vomited, and, spite of unlimited cognac, had to be sent back to the ship. After they had got the last remnant of rotting flesh over the side they went below, but found it impossible to dislodge the curiously-caked fuel that choked the

the intention of doing this, when I saw a patch of colour flutter out from her bridge and climb slowly to the jumper-stay. With the naked eye I could make out the flags to be B.S.L., and rushing into the chart-house, I dragged out the code list and read the signal—'Is anything the matter?' My mind was still too hazy to be able to think of any definite answer, for I found myself hunting about among the geographical signals. However, while idly turning over the leaves my eye lit on the 'Urgent' signal column, and the flags P.B.—'Want immediate assistance,' and feverishly pulling the flags from their pigeon-holes, I bent them on and ran them up to the stay.

"Then, as I saw the steamer's propeller churning astern and a boat being lowered, ship and horizon commenced reeling round and heaving, a red mist swam before my eyes, and with the halyards still in my hands, I lurched heavily forwards, and everything became a blank."

The consul's constable stopped and sat gazing moodily at his glass. The second leaned forward and refilled it.

"And what became of the ship?"

"Sold."

"Why did they sell her?"

The second officer's curiosity was not yet satisfied.

"Well, what happened afterward I will have to tell you in the words of the second officer of the *Gascoigne*. He was a very decent sort for a

"It was myself—my features line for line, even to the deep scar you see on my cheek—and it was inviting me to peace and rest in the translucent depths below there. I must go. I felt I must; for there were the grisly corpses of my former shipmates urging me on from behind.

"At last, as with a supreme effort I tore my eyes away and cast one last imploring look at the relentless skies, my heart commenced to beat again for joy. There, not two miles away, was the French mail steamer standing down toward me, black wreaths of smoke pouring from her funnels. I think it was that throbbing pain of joy that came with the knowledge that I was near living human beings that saved me from stark insanity at that critical moment.

"The intensity of my relief so overpowered me at first that I cared not whether they saw me. I was not alone on the boundless sea with this charnel-ship. That was the only thought that tingled its way through my brain. There were living beings near me—beings who could speak, beings who would not glare at me so wherever I went, beings whose flesh was firm and sweet, not like these that hung in putrid tatters.

"Then came the horrible fear that they would pass on and leave me alone again, and with the thought came action. If I was to receive help, I must hoist some signal. I was turning away with

sickening thud to the deck. Then, as I leaned a little forward, I caught again the stare of those horrible, filmy eyes, and, with a shudder, I pushed the corpse far out from me and stood watching it as it slowly sank alongside.

"The eyes were still wide open, and after circling slowly down a little way it turned on its back and stared mockingly up at me through the clear seas as the arms, relaxed by the water, floated upwards as though inviting me to join it. Little bits of clothing and flesh floated round it, some still held to the corpse by strings and tendons.

"It sank out of sight at last, and I stood, I knew not how long, gazing horrified into the water, when I seemed to see the thing reappear again a few fathoms from the surface floating slowly upwards.

"I looked helplessly at it with its arms held toward me waving gently to and fro as it swung, then gradually the face was turned full toward me, and I staggered back with screams of mad terror.

"The face that looked up at me from below there was my own face. A terrible fascination drew me back irresistibly to the rails, and I stood looking down at my other self as it floated beneath the water smiling that sardonic smile.

"Twice, as my brain reeled with horror of the thing, I started to clamber over the rail toward it, and twice drew back shivering.

This I dragged out, and with averted head made fast to the second officer's feet. The skin and flesh fell away from the softened bones as I touched him, and clung in shreds to my fingers, but I was calm with the stillness of despair, and hardly heeded the reeking stench of putrid flesh that arose when I disturbed him.

"With infinite pains I succeeded, weak as I was, in getting the body poised on the rail, and held it there, staring stupidly at the knotted muscles on the hands and arms, some of them showing blue and white, where the flesh had fallen away and left them exposed.

"What had I to do now? I tried to think. He had once been a shipmate of mine, this ghastly mass of rotting flesh, and a good sort in his way, though a little wild and given to aimless frolic. Perhaps he was sorry for it now. Ah, yes, the burial service. What was it? I had seen several poor fellows buried at sea, but now my bewildered brain would recall no word of the service but the ominous 'Commit the body to the deep.' Something came before that. What was it? I asked myself wildly. I tried to pray, I who had uttered no word of prayer for long years, and never a prayer would come.

"All this time I was keeping the corpse balanced across the rail, and every now and then a great mass of the flesh would detach itself from the rest, torn away by its own weight, and fall with a

hands clenched so tightly that I could see where the nails had cut into the flesh. He was lying on his back, inclined a little toward the left, but his head was twisted round until, glaring over his right shoulder, the glassy orbs were turned full on me.

"As I looked at him again I felt the hair rising erect on my head and the blood freezing in my veins. The eyes seemed fixed on mine with a leer of understanding that it seemed impossible could creep into the eyes of a man two days dead and well on the way to putrefaction.

"Then, while I stared in fascination at the dreadful sight, the snarl on his lips seemed to broaden into a horrible smile of savage triumph.

"I sprang up with a shriek that rang through the silent ship, and stumbled in terror farther from the grisly thing. But when I dared look again, the eyes had followed my movements, and were staring at me with the same grim, frightful malice. I whimpered like a little child in my anguish and horror; then I laughed long and loudly. I knew then, that if I was to preserve my tottering reason, I must get rid of those frightful corpses, that seemed to be luring me on to join them in that set smile of death.

"The prospect of action of some sort served to steady my shattered nerves. There lay in the wheel-house a few feet away a detached cog-wheel that had been used with the hand steering gear.

engine-room, and thence into the stokehold. We had been about eighty or ninety miles off Cape Varella when the deadly meteorite fell, and perhaps if I could succeed in getting steam up alone I might make the coast or get into the track of vessels. At least the motion would blow that vile dust away.

"The boilers were still hot, and a thin jet of steam, singing through a leak in the stop-valve above, seemed to promise success; but when I opened the furnace doors and tried to rake out the burnt fuel, I found to my dismay that the pink dust, drawn by the draught into the fires, had melted, and, cooling again, had formed a thin metallic coating over the whole mass, binding it firmly together and making it impossible to break off the smallest lump.

"Back I went to the deck, with the vision of a livid, twisted fireman grinning at me in ghastly derision. I felt I was going mad, for I was babbling and laughing aloud. Why had I been reserved for this? Would to God, I whimpered, that I had not fallen down the ventilator! How long would it take to die? Should I have to wander about among the grim dead until, my stock of waters being exhausted, I laid myself down beside them to die of the slow agony of thirst? I sat down again and looked around. The second officer was lying on the deck a few feet away, his limbs extended to their fullest stretch, and the

about the deck again, and it was beginning to choke me. I sat down with my back against the fiddley and tried to think. My nerves were thoroughly unstrung. I remember thinking with amusement of the numerous rats that had pestered us, and wondering how they had fared.

"Then I suddenly burst into tears and cried for half an hour like a little child. That seemed to relieve me, and after awhile hunger and thirst drove me down to the pantry in search of food. The steward had dropped in his tracks, and was lying athwart the pantry door, glaring at me with glassy eyes. I cowered back shuddering, until, hunger-impelled, I darted forward, and snatching a piece of meat that lay on the dresser just within the door, retreated; but the first ravenous bite I took caused me to spit it out and cough. It was impregnated with the terrible gas that had wrought such havoc among my shipmates.

"The water was the same, but I remembered the aerated waters that were kept in the ice-chest; being corked, they were undefiled by the gas, and with these and a tin of lobster which I found and opened I refreshed myself.

"Then I returned to the deck and tried to realise my position.

"I was alone on the wide sea with nothing but the rotting corpses of my former shipmates, staring at me with filmy eyes, for company.

"I rose in despair and wandered down into the

covering him over like a light veil. With an indescribable thrill of fear, I ran up on the lower bridge and looked around.

"The captain was lying, or rather crouching, at the foot of the upper bridge ladder, his eyes wide open and his face contorted and livid. A piece of his coat was stuffed into his mouth, and the teeth had closed on it, holding it as in a vice. He too was covered with the dust, and when I went up to him and tried to sweep it from his face the skin came away in my hand.

"I turned away dizzy and sick, and hunted through the ship. Nothing but the ghastly dead! Dead but two days, and already rotting and putrid!

"I stood still and shouted, or rather I tried to shout, but my voice rose in a scream and quavered away to a groan. Nothing answered me but the swish of the water alongside.

"I found the second officer lying a few feet from the chart-house, his eyes fixed in a glassy stare, and the teeth drawn back from the livid lips in what seemed to my distorted fancy a savage snarl. Two of the engineers I found on the lower bridge with the same twisted limbs and contorted features, and covered with that horrible dust, but nowhere did I find a living being.

"The chief officer I never saw; perhaps he had leapt overboard in his frenzy.

"My movements were sending the dust whirling

always been a thorn in our sides, and if the angels took careful note of what we said about it, all of us must long since have lost our chance of heaven. The builders had put it in her for convenience of Chinese 'tween-deck passengers, and whenever there was a bit of sea on that skylight used to get stove in.

"Now I blessed the skylight and blessed the builder who put it there. With a piece of dunnage wood I smashed the glass, and, climbing through the hole, found myself on deck.

"There I stood stock still, wondering if the sudden glare of light had affected my sight. Sea, deck, hatches, everything around appeared to my dazed eyes pale pink. To prove myself that my eyes were somehow wrong, I passed my hand across the skylight from which I had just emerged. It was covered by a light, impalpable powder, which the current of air raised by my hand sent circling up in clouds. The sea was glassy, and I could see the powder floating on and under the surface to the depth of three or four feet."

The consul's constable stopped and shivered a little, and the second officer silently passed him the bottle. After he had gulped down a few mouthfuls of raw whisky, he went on.

"I saw one of the Chinamen lying on deck, apparently asleep, but when I went up to him I uttered a cry of horror. The man was dead as a door-nail, dead and rigid, with the pink dust


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